





Sketch

Harriet ducks her comeuppance



Simon Hoggart

IT WAS tense, agonising and finely balanced, but Harriet Harman won. At some point in the previous 24 hours she had finally realised how desperate her position was. As she should have done on Monday, she came out fighting. She was fortunate in her timing. She slid on to the front bench as John Major was making a statement on Northern Ireland and the Mitchell report. She was wearing a puce trouser suit, which some might think an even greater offence than sending her child to a selective school. The Tories remained silent. The Sainted John Hume (SDLP, Foyle) had just contrived to imply that the Prime Minister had decided on elections in the province in order to buy Unionist votes. Very few believe that. And it's hard to persuade MPs to speak against elections, since it's elections which made them what they are today, whatever that might be. Mr Hume has shown astonishing bravery over the past 27 years. He received death threats as often as more comfortable MPs get lunch invitations. Yet he brings a pious whiff of incense, a breath of the Celtic mists. Tories have never quite trusted him, so when the Prime Minister angrily denied that he had any intention of buying votes, they cheered him again. The Tories find it hard to have two enemies at once — it's the equivalent, in LBJ's words, of having to fart and chew gum at the same time. Ms Harman was also fortunate in her topic: it would be hard to make a speech about the NHS which didn't rouse Labour cheers. Most of all, she

was blessed in her persecutors. David Shaw (Dover) and Quentin Davies (Stamford) are the kind of Tories who make Labour MPs suspect she might even deserve some sympathy. And when David Trednick (Bosworth), one of the MPs who took cash for questions, interrupted, even her old enemy John Prescott rubbed his fingers as if to ask "how much this time?" But it was Elaine Kallett-Bowman who saved her. Ms Harman had persistently ignored her attempts to intervene. The Dame's voice rose higher. At one point she screamed "Sexist!" across the Chamber, and somewhere nearby several bales fell dead from the rafters. She tried again. And again. Finally she rose on a point of order. Now her voice was so shrill I could barely hear her. Still, it did end one hitherto unsolved mystery: why did Devon Loch fall just yards from winning the 1956 Grand National? Dame Elaine must have been cheering it on. "Is it in order," she squealed, jamming air traffic control as far away as Prestwick, "for her to practise SEX DISCRIMINATION?" Ms Harman paused a moment. "It isn't sex discrimination which makes me not respond to the honourable lady's intervention. It is kindness." Another pause, then the Labour benches erupted in delight. Trivial, meaningless, insulting — it was all of those things. But in the weird physics of parliament, it was a pivot, the moment at which Labour backbenchers decided to forgive her — for now. She will receive her punishment in the next election, at the Shadow Cabinet elections. But her happy day should not conceal the cause of the deep and bitter resentment still felt by most of her colleagues. The party's worst disaster since 1982 has been the fault of a quintessential member of the inner circle. Mr Blair had to protect Ms Harman by hurling his leadership in front of her frail body. He may not be able to do this again.

Book review

A sauce of sexual gratification

Simon Hoggart

A Woman's Place  
Edwina Currie

EDWINA Currie will get some awful reviews for this book, and I am determined that she should get at least one kindly one. This is it. The novel rattles along. There is murder, rape, suicide, gay scandal and bags of political crises. Most of her characters can expect to get laid and resign from office at least once in every chapter. She also captures the sleaziness of the Conservative Party and, in the crooked Asian businessman buying himself a peerage, has created a fine monster. Mrs Currie is a good hater, and it's fun to guess which old scores she is paying off. She or her publishers have also defied the Speaker, two years ago Ms Boothroyd rebuked her for using the Commons portacalls, the House's logo on the cover of A Parliamentary Affair. This time it appears twice, decorating a pair of long, silk-sheathed legs. Traditionally, thrillers written by MPs have good political scenes, interspersed with dollops of embarrassing sex. This one, published by Hodder, is the reverse: sex with some less convincing political scenes. This may be because Mrs Currie's ministerial career was so short. She is a healthy

woman, and I would guess she has spent more of her life having sex than going through red boxes. That would account for her greater assurance in that field. In any event, no firm rump stays unpunished, no bosom unfondled, no penis goes for long without flickering into life, often several times a night. Mrs Currie's fascination with reproduction and the dessert trolley has continued. In the last book the heroine licked a strawberry from her lover's private part; in this, her boyfriend coarsens her in chocolate sauce ("reared up and set her breasts... chocolate stains, you know. I hope you got it all off"). The main drawback is the prose. I would guess it has been thoroughly edited, but the most careful fretsaw work cannot cut round the more inelegant lines, which bring the reader's eye to a jerky halt. For instance: "Chadwick allowed as he remembered his relief that the HIV test had come through negative"; "she unfastened the buttons of his shirt, as his arms hung helplessly at his side. In a moment his shirt and a Damart vest had joined his coat on the floor"; and my favourite: "Thank you, Michael." The Queen kicked a corgi from under her feet, patted her stiff grey hair and stole a final look at herself in the mirror." That said, I can imagine words of passing a long journey.

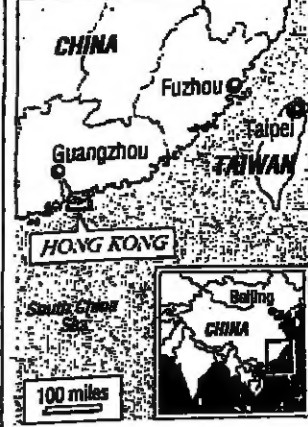
Taiwan appeals for US arms as China 'prepares to unleash military assault'



Crowds gather under huge portraits of President Lee Teng-hui and his running mate, Premier Lien Chan, at their party headquarters in Taipei. The pair launched their campaign yesterday, ready for the poll on March 23

Andrew Higgins  
in Hong Kong

TAIWAN yesterday appealed for more weapons from the United States amid signals from China that the People's Liberation Army has completed contingency plans for a limited military assault, possibly a rocket attack, on the island. President Lee Teng-hui's request follows an intensifying campaign of intimidation by mainland China. In the past six months, Beijing has tested missiles, rehearsed amphibious landings and declared coastal areas facing Taiwan a "war zone". "People are screaming if they think this is not serious," said David Shambaugh, an authority on Sino-US relations at London University. "It has all the elements for a very combustible situation." Particularly dangerous, experts say, is China's apparent belief that the US would not intervene to help Taiwan because of commitments in Bosnia and impending elections. Taiwan television and evening newspapers gave extensive coverage to a New York Times report that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) could unleash an attack within weeks of Taiwan holding its first democratic presidential poll next month. The winner is likely to be the incumbent president, Mr Lee, condemned by Beijing as a "stinker for all millenniums". The US denied yesterday that it had received warnings from Beijing of a possible attack on Taiwan. "I am not aware of any specific Chinese assertions to the United States along the lines of those reported in the New York Times story this morning," the state department spokesman, Nicholas Burns, said. "To our knowledge, the Chinese government has not changed its fundamental policy of seeking a peaceful reunification with Taiwan." Officials in Taipei appealed for calm. "Trust our army," Chan Chih-hung of the mainland affairs council said. "It can certainly protect national



security." China's belligerence towards Taiwan, which Beijing considers a rebel province, sends a worrying signal to Hong Kong, where the PLA will garrison some 6,000 troops after 1997. China has irredentist claims involving 10 neighbouring states. China dismissed the report of an attack plan as "totally groundless". But US sources said Chinese leaders had raised such a possibility in private conversations. Such warnings appear more an attempt to sound out US intentions and put pressure on Taiwanese voters than an indication of a clear battle plan. Andrew Yang, head of the Chinese Council of Advance Policy Studies in Taipei, said factions within the PLA were pressing for military action but faced opposition from more prudent voices in an uncertain collective leadership. The US, which viewed Taiwan as an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" in the 1950s and 1960s, faces a dilemma over how far to support it. It scrapped a joint defence treaty and withdrew troops in 1979, but remains committed, under the Taiwan Relations Act, to providing arms of a "defensive character". Mr Lee, who engaged Beijing by making a private visit to the US last summer, yesterday called on Washington to keep supplying arms and "in doing so safeguard the safety of the Taiwan Strait". Taipei is lobbying for anti-missile systems.

US revives firing squad's dying art

A condemned man's last requests are writing Ian Katz in Salt Lake City



Taylor: Due to die tonight. He refused a lethal injection

JOHN ALBERT TAYLOR was quite specific about the pizza. "He wants mushroom, hot peppers, ham, pepperoni and extra cheese," said Jack Ford, spokesman for the Utah Department of Corrections. "And a Coke. He doesn't want a Pepsi, he wants a Coke. We'll have to order out." Procuring Taylor's last meal is the least of the problems Utah authorities have faced since the convicted child murderer dropped his appeals last month and demanded to be put to death by firing squad, the state's traditional but now rarely used method of execution. Since no one has been killed by firing squad in the United States since Gary Gilmore snapped "let's do it" in 1977, prison officials were left scrambling to improvise a setting that would minimise its brutality. That is precisely what Taylor, aged 38, intended. Explaining his rejection of the more popular lethal injection method, he said he did not want to "pop around... like a dying fish". But he also said he saw no reason to make life easy for his executioners. But Utah's prison officials have proved resourceful in

reviving their dying art. Barring a last-minute change of heart, Taylor will be shot dead shortly after midnight tonight (8am GMT tomorrow), strapped to a specially built metal chair designed to "contain his bodily fluids" and funnel them into a pan underneath. The execution will be carried out in a cell by 14th fibreglass chamber erected in a warehouse at Utah State Prison. Five marksmen — four with live rounds — will fire .30-calibre rifles at a red cloth marking Taylor's heart from behind a partition. A row of sandbags draped in a cloth has been placed behind the execution chair to avoid ricochets. "The drape is there just to pretty up the sandbags, to make it look less like an outdoor execution site," Mr Ford said. To the chagrin of a booming state celebrating its centenary and looking forward to hosting the 2002 Winter Olympics, the execution has attracted international attention and made Utah the centre of a revived debate about capital punishment. Both the American Civil Liberties Union and Amnesty International say they will respect Taylor's wish not to mount appeals on his behalf. But the representatives, and a Catholic bishop, were to protest yesterday to senior state legislators. Several legislators have said they will back a bill that could make this the last US execution by firing squad. "I believe it's 1996 and this is a very sad and difficult

But according to some state commentators, Utah's majority Mormon population believes the firing squad satisfies their church's requirement for "blood atonement" by murderers. Of 48 executions this century, 39 have been carried out by this method. "It's really never been questioned," said L. Kay Gillespie, professor of criminal justice at Weber State University, Ogden. "It's pretty much business as usual in Utah." Each member of a firing squad receives \$300 (£200) in cash. "We let the heads of law enforcement agencies select the people," Mr Ford said. "We did not want people who were out for revenge and might want to shoot the guy in the knee-cap, or people who would have nightmares about it afterwards." Since Taylor has not exhausted the appeals process, he will be able to stop the execution almost until the order to fire is given. A federal judge will be on stand-by. A hood will be placed on Taylor's head before the execution, which will be watched by nine local reporters, five government representatives and up to five witnesses chosen by the condemned man. Taylor had asked for a cigarette with his last meal, but smoking is barred indoors under Utah's Clean Air Act. "It has been decided that he will be allowed to smoke a cigarette on his way to the holding cell 24 hours before the execution," Mr Ford said. "He will be outside then, so it won't be breaking the law."

Fax an affront to House, say MPs

David Hencke  
Westminster Correspondent

PETER PRESTON, the former editor of the Guardian, and the newspaper "were guilty of unwise and improper conduct" in forging a letter purporting to come from Jonathan Aitken, a former Cabinet minister, but no action will be taken against him, the Commons Privileges Committee ruled yesterday. The committee condemns the former editor's action as an affront to the House. It adds: "It is unacceptable for anyone other than a Member of Parliament or a person acting on that member's authority to use official notepaper. It is even more unacceptable when the notepaper and a signature is used deliberately to give the impression that that authority has been given." The report declines to go into the circumstances surrounding the use of what became known as the "cod fax" which was sent to obtain the former minister's bill at the Ritz Hotel, Paris, as part of an inquiry into Mr Aitken's stay there with two Arab businessmen. Wider allegations involving payments to MPs made by Mohamed Al-Fayed, owner of Harrods and the Ritz, in private evidence to the committee, have been deleted from the report. Instead MPs have sent the evidence to Sir Gor-

don Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, so that it can be investigated by the new committee of privileges and standards, chaired by Tony Newton, Leader of the House. Mr Preston said yesterday that he welcomed this action. Mr Preston, in evidence to MPs, apologised for using the fax. He said that he had sent it to protect his source and no one had been deceived. The telephone and fax numbers used were the Guardian's. Inquiries were being made in the public interest because Mr Aitken was not giving straightforward answers. "I hope my reputation in almost 20 years at the Guardian was not as some mad ayatollah trying to pull down the temples of public life. Rightly or wrongly, I was very anxious... where I felt one was asking legitimate questions but was not being given straightforward answers, should be pursued." Mr Al-Fayed in his evidence to MPs said he had been alerted to Mr Aitken's stay at the same time as two prominent Saudi businessmen, Mohammed Said Ayan and Waide Said, an arms dealer, whom his manager told him that Mr Aitken, then minister for defence procurement, was a guest of Mr Ayan. This was later shown on the bill obtained through the fax. Mr Aitken has always denied that Mr Ayan paid his bill.



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# Universities propose levy on students

John Carvel and Donald MacLeod

UNIVERSITY students could be made to pay an emergency levy of several hundred pounds a head under proposals being tabled this week by vice-chancellors' leaders anxious to recoup at least part of the 12 per cent cut in their income from the taxpayer due over the next three years.

The plan would break the principle that students should not have to pay for higher education and would add to financial pressures caused by recent progressive reductions in maintenance grants.

Gareth Roberts, chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and head of Sheffield University, said a one-off charge at a flat rate of perhaps between £100 and £200 could be levied on students at all universities in the academic year 1997/8.

"It is a short-term strategy," he said. "The medium-term one has to be to change the way higher education is funded."

Levying the charge would let universities recoup some of the cuts announced by Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, in the November Budget. By 1999 the vice-chancellors will be left £550 million short of the income needed to maintain the current service.

They fear the squeeze is likely to turn out to be even fiercer since the Government has not yet decided where to find the £100 million lost from the 1996/7 accounts when it was forced in December to postpone the privatisation of student loans.

The proposal for a levy on students was being completed last night for circulation to the 104 vice chancellors, who

will decide on their response to the Government at an emergency meeting on February 2. It was still not clear if it would apply to all first degree students or only the new intake of about 600,000 when they registered.

They will also be asked to debate an alternative option — a boycott of quality assurance measures which the Government has requested to assess how well students are taught.

A Guardian survey of vice-chancellors has established that both alternatives are hotly contested, but there is a determination that some decisive action must be taken to register opposition to unsustainable cuts.

"I am not willing to see the rundown of higher education in this country in the same way as secondary education — if you don't believe in fairness students will have to pay," said Sir Derek Roberts, provost of University College London, whose academic board will consider a £1,000 top-up fee next month.

Martin Harris, vice-chancellor of Manchester University, said there was an option of cutting student intakes by 7 per cent to compensate for the cuts, but this would bring in no extra money. He told the university's ruling court that top-up fees, combined with a better student loans scheme, were now the only alternative to irreversible decline.

Mrs Shephard had been thought to be sympathetic to a top-up fee as long as universities took the responsibility. But a spokesman said yesterday "The Government sees no need for top-up fees and is concerned they might disadvantage students from less well-off families."

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Sarah Cook arrives with her husband Musa Komeagac, and his father Ali for questioning by police in Kahramanmaraş

PHOTOGRAPH: OSMAN SAYIN

# Court orders child bride to come back to Britain

Sally Weale and Alan Watkins

SARAH COOK, the 13-year-old Essex girl who married an unemployed Turkish waiter in an illegal Muslim ceremony, has been ordered to return to Britain after being made a ward of court. The order was made after an application by social services.

This followed outrage at her marriage three weeks ago to the 18-year-old, whom she met during a family holiday. Last night, however, it was unclear whether she would comply with the order, which is only enforceable within the jurisdiction of England and Wales.

After a 30-minute private application by Essex county council at London's High

Court yesterday, Sir Stephen Brown, president of the Family Division, ruled that Sarah should be returned to the court's jurisdiction forthwith.

He ordered that her passport should be surrendered on her return to the official solicitor, Peter Harris, and he barred her from travelling outside Britain without the permission of the court.

He also imposed a gagging order on her parents to prevent them giving further information to the media. Jackie and Adrian Cook are understood to have been paid £20,000 by the Sun for their daughter's story.

Yesterday the teenager from Braintree showed little sign of a change of heart. She was being cared for by the parents of her husband, Musa Komeagac, who remained in custody facing a charge of

rape after being refused bail. Her father-in-law, Ali Komeagac, said: "Sarah is my son's bride. If she wants to stay, our home is her home."

Her 37-year-old mother, who has said she now wants to bring her daughter home, was due to be reunited with Sarah in the town of Kahramanmaraş in south-eastern Turkey last night. She is expected to give evidence when Komeagac is brought before the court again today.

In Britain the case will be reviewed in the High Court next Monday, when Sarah's parents will be invited to offer their views. The official solicitor and Essex county council have been asked to prepare reports.

As a result of wardship proceedings, the court takes over parental responsibility for the child's welfare until the child

is 18 or the court decides otherwise.

The British vice-consul in Ankara, Trudie Pak, also travelled to Kahramanmaraş to notify Sarah of the court order instructing her to return to Britain. Her journey could be delayed if she and her parents refuse to abide by the summons.

While the Cooks are in Turkey, British authorities are powerless, but they could be held in contempt on their return to Britain if they disregard the order. In addition the Turkish authorities could refuse to renew Sarah's 90-day visa, which expires next month.

Mike Leadbetter, director of Essex social services, said he had no indication that either Sarah or her parents, who gave their consent to the marriage, had changed their

view that she should remain in Turkey.

If Sarah returned, he said, it would be for the High Court to decide whether she would be allowed to continue living with her parents or whether the county council would become responsible for her care. Relatives say that if there is any chance of Sarah being placed in care, she is unlikely to hurry back.

In an interview with the Sun yesterday, Sarah threatened to kill herself if Komeagac remained in jail. "I can't stand being apart from him. We just want to be together. He is my husband and I love him."

Her father, Adrian, aged 42, told GMTV: "We have done our utmost for her, to make sure she was safe. She did what she wanted to do — that's her wish. We just went

along with her dreams. But now her dreams have been shattered by the Turkish government."

According to Turkish law governing marriage, although it is frequently ignored, girls cannot marry before the age of 15, but in exceptional circumstances courts can grant permission for 14-year-olds.

Mr Komeagac's lawyer, who has threatened to resist attempts to deport Sarah, could now apply to the courts for permission for the couple to marry legally once Sarah is 14 in September.

Essex police say they are doubtful whether any offence has been committed in Britain, although the role of Sarah's parents in encouraging the relationship with her boyfriend is being scrutinised by lawyers and senior officers.

# Mortgage rate cut to 30-year-low

Teresa Hunter

BRITAIN'S fifth-biggest building society, the Bradford & Bingley, yesterday unleashed a new price-war by cutting its mortgage rate to a 30-year low in a bid to discredit competitors abandoning their century-old "mutual" tradition to become banks.

The Bradford & Bingley yesterday pledged to give £50 million of profits to its customers by cutting its mortgage rate by 0.25 per cent to a new low of 7.24 per cent. Savers will see their returns boosted by 0.25 per cent.

The move is designed to fire a shot across the bows of building societies such as the Halifax and the Woolwich, which have promised their members big incentives if they support plans to convert to a public company.

Geoffrey Lister, Bradford & Bingley chief executive, said: "Building societies were set up to put their customers' interests first — not those of shareholders. Once a building society becomes a bank that is lost forever."

Rob Thomas, UBS housing analyst, suggested the B&B had triggered a mortgage price war.

He said: "It is a very significant move which will put pressure on all lenders to cut their rates. They may not do so immediately, but over time they will have to fall into line."

## Mortgage rates

Percentage	Rate
Stafford	6.99
Salisbury	7.24
Bradford & Bingley	7.24
Cheltenham & Gloucester	7.34
Cambridge	7.35
Seaford	7.35
Newbury	7.39
Kent Reliance	7.50
Yorkshire	7.50
Halifax	7.49
Abbey National	7.54

Source: Moneyfacts

The Halifax and the Abbey National said they had no plans to follow. Their mortgage rates are now higher than a range of small lenders committed to remaining building societies.

B&B borrowers will see their repayments on a £60,000 mortgage fall by about £10 a month to £410 from March.

The society hopes the lower repayments will help kick-start the housing market, which has hit rock bottom with mortgage transactions in 1996 at their lowest for 21 years. But the society's main motive is to convince borrowers and savers there is no need to sell out their building societies.

Leader comment, page 8

# Blair crushes revolt over Harman school decision

continued from page 1

for sending his children to poor local comprehensives in Tottenham, north London.

Later, Ms Harman survived Tory backbench charges of hypocrisy when she led a Labour attack in the Commons on the Government's health record. She swung some backbenchers round by claiming those using the private sector were refugees from an NHS starved of government resources.

Her future was raised only briefly at a private meeting of the shadow cabinet. Labour officials privately conceded that Ms Harman's choice of a

selective school had inflicted long-term damage. They predicted a big drop in their poll lead.

Left-wing Labour backbenchers also forecast that the backlash would continue in the wider party and said Ms Harman would be ejected from the shadow cabinet in the autumn.

In the Commons, the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, mocked what he said was the failure of some shadow cabinet colleagues to support Ms Harman on the airwaves, dubbing their actions "the chorus of the Hebrew slaves in mime."

# Snooper spouses get a steam up

Angella Johnson

HOW safe is your mail in the hands of your partner? Not very, according to a survey which shows that six out of 10 people cannot resist reading their spouse's letters, and that 16 per cent resort to steaming them open.

The study, commissioned by the Royal Mail, reveals that while people in the Midlands are the least trusting (73 per cent would read a partner's letters), it is in the south-west that they are most likely to be found holding the envelope over a boiling kettle. Only 8 per cent of folks in Northern Ireland would snoop.

The Gallup poll of 2,000 adults and 1,000 children across Britain shows that while it may be good to talk on the phone, as Bob Hoskins regularly reminds us in British Telecom adverts, a letter is considered better for communicating really important news.

More than seven out of 10 adults prefer to write if they have something important or emotional to say. A huge 84 per cent believe writing a letter shows someone has put time and thought into it.

Londoners top the league for letter-writing (87 per cent), followed by 81 per cent in Northern Ireland, but most of such correspondence is gossip and titillation.

The survey also suggests that "Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells" has been eclipsed by "Angry from Anglia" in the complaining stakes, with East Anglians composing four times as

many letters of complaint (29 per cent) as people in Northern Ireland (9 per cent).

When asked why they write letters, most people (86 per cent) said it was to keep in touch — surprisingly 72 per cent of 16 to 24 year olds say they enjoy this form of communication, a quarter suggesting it was often easier to express themselves this way.

A high proportion of those interviewed said they valued a personal letter much more than a fax or computer message. The Queen is still the public figure people would most like to get a letter from.

Adam Novak, Royal Mail director and general manager, said: "People believe that if someone writes them a letter, it shows they care enough to have invested time and thought in it."

Mr Novak revealed that the number of letters posted every day is to reach a record 70 million, an increase of 10 million in the last five years. The increase is thought to have been helped by a huge increase in the number of outlets selling stamps — a total of 20,000 post offices and 80,000 retail outlets.

On average, more than 800 are posted each second and about 300 full sheets of mail arrive at sorting offices every minute. Britain's 26 million addresses receive an average of 2.8 letters a day.

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One would be forgiven for thinking that the country was divided into anxious middle-class parents willing to sell their souls for the sake of a few GCSEs, and the rest of us, who are so stupid, so poor, so unambitious that we send our children to any old school. One may as well slaughter them in cold blood as let them go somewhere they don't have to wear a uniform.

Suzanne Moore O2 page 8

as China assault  
CHINA  
an affront to use, say MPs  
BU PA



SELECTION SURVIVOR: Opinions in Committee Room 12 range from resign calls to total support over school choice



For Bernie Grant Gave '100pc support' Attacked schools in Tottenham which let down his children



Against Alice Mahon If Harman was set on sending her son to a selective school she should resign



For Judith Church London schools poor due to lack of resources and social mix. Any mother would make same choice



Against Clive Soley Education at comprehensive school had helped him cope with life It was time for her to quit

Harman contrite before Labour jury

Blair denounces 'Tory bastards'

Patrick Wintour, Chief Political Correspondent

HARRIET Harman's dramatic one-hour trial by Labour MPs yesterday saw a denunciation of "Tory bastards" by Tony Blair, stumbling contribution from Ms Harman, and three calls to her face to quit. The Parliamentary Labour Party's debate on its health spokeswoman's decision to send her son, aged 11, to a grammar school, opened in a packed Committee Room 12, when Michael Martin, MP for Glasgow Springburn, said the party was in a wounded state. He said it was right to send your children to the local comprehensive. It enhanced his children's experience, even though they came home most days saying how bad the school was.



In the firing line... Harriet Harman braving Tory jibes as she led Labour's NES attack in the Commons, watched by Tony Blair and John Prescott

his son to the Oratory, a grant-maintained Catholic school, could be the Achilles heel of Labour's education policy. Nicholas Jones, one of the most independent minded and vigorous of BBC journalists, ran with the story.

address, Ms Harman said: "I deeply regret that any decision I have taken has given any succour to the Tories and any opportunity for them to attack the Labour Party. I apologise to colleagues for the diversion. I understand the strength of feeling and deeply regret the distress caused. I am opposed to selection."

Mr Blair, in an impassioned speech, said: "I have had enough of yielding to these bastards (referring to the Tories). They are not going to have a scalp. I know how it hurts you, but now is the time, when the whole bloody world is toppling on top of you, that we stand firm, we fight, and we win."

Primary school concert allows interlude on a difficult day

8.00am: Arrives at BBC Millbank studios for interview on Today programme and BBC Breakfast News. 9.30am: Leaves Westminster to attend nine-year-old daughter Amy's first school concert - where she is making her debut on the cello - at Hamlet junior school, Southwark, the same primary attended by son Joe, at centre of schools controversy. 11.30am: Dashes from office at 7 Millbank with health team colleagues Alan Milburn and Henry McLeish, and fellow frontbencher Clive Soley to attend Commons meeting of Parliamentary Labour Party. 11.06am: Tells around 200 Labour MPs packed into Committee Room 12 that she is sorry for offering "succour" to Tories after having made a "difficult choice." After hour long meeting, works on speech for afternoon debate on National Health Service. 4.15pm: Slips into Commons chamber virtually unnoticed as Prime Minister takes questions on Ireland. Labour benches crowded with frontbenchers and Blair supporters. Tony Blair and John Prescott arrive and sit next to her just as she is due to open Labour-initiated debate. 5.20pm: Shadow Cabinet meeting, which Harman does not attend as she is still involved in debate.

Crisis for spin doctors started with phone call to headmaster

Blair's aides had known of Harman school story before Christmas, but still found it hard to control. Patrick Wintour reports

THE crisis that has given Tony Blair the worst three days of his leadership began with a phone call on Friday from Joe Murphy, the political reporter of the Mail on Sunday. He had picked up that Harriet Harman, the shadow health secretary, was sending her second son to the elite grant-maintained school, St Olave's, in Orpington, Kent. He made a check phone call to the headmaster on the Friday afternoon. The headmaster was not totally discreet, but also rang Ms Harman to inform her the press had been on to him. She immediately rang Mr Blair's office where a full red alert was called. His office had known, and privately disapproved, of Ms Harman's decision before Christmas. But Mr Blair had been presented with a fait accompli by Ms Harman. The boy had passed the exam, and was going to the school. She explained that many of his friends would be going to the school and it suited his needs. The only other senior politician who knew at the time was the Labour whip, Donald Dewar. Temperamentally, he is not a man to hit the roof, but he certainly looked up at the skies on hearing the news. Mr Blair felt he could not tell Ms Harman to pull the boy out. Equally, if he ordered her to resign from the front bench, the Tories would have had a field day. Ms Harman, then under instruction from Mr Blair's

would be at Westminster, ensuring they would talk themselves into a lather in the tea rooms. The small army of Labour spin doctors waited on Saturday to see if the story would take off. To their relief, all seemed quiet. Ms Harman might be able to get away with it. But on Sunday, Clive Soley gave the impression on GMTV - her real view but given apparently inadvertently, that she disapproved of Ms Harman's decision, but said she had every right to make it. Clive Soley, MP for Ham-

Northern male MPs have little time for her. They regard her as incompetent and do not recognise her pull on TV. 'Birdbrain' is one of their kinder epithets

Ms Harman's decision and that the news was about to break. John Prescott, the deputy leader and long-term critic of Ms Harman, did not become aware until Saturday, complaining the impression that the Blair office was leaving him out of the big decisions. Many other shadow cabinet members were furious. Some involved in party presentation argued that if they had known about the story, they would have released it when Parliament was not sitting. Instead it had emerged on the worst week possible. For the next week, there were to be four three-line whip votes. All Labour MPs

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Embattled spokeswoman defies jibes in health debate

Rebecca Smithers Political Correspondent

THE shadow health secretary, Harriet Harman, yesterday fought off Tory attempts to throw her off her stride in the Commons and delivered a fierce attack on the National Health Service, which she claimed the Government had torn "limb from limb". She insisted the debate, initiated by Labour and arranged well before the furore over her son's schooling, was about the crisis in the NHS. With husband Jack Dromey watching from the public gallery and the Labour benches packed behind her, she savaged the Government's health

record and the shortage of beds, with new figures showing that 53 hospitals in England, Wales and Scotland are turning patients away. She claimed health care had become "a lottery depending on where you live" and the NHS being pushed into the private sector through a strategy of "creeping privatisation". Labour, she insisted, would invest the £1.5 billion wasted by the Tories on bureaucracy into "frontline services" which would deliver a better deal to patients. Ms Harman issued stern, swift rebukes to several Tory MPs who attempted to destabilise her. She was rewarded with a pat on the arm by the Labour leader, Tony Blair, who showed his support by sitting to her left on the front bench with deputy leader John Prescott. To the surprise of many MPs, the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, launched straight into an attack on what he claimed was Labour's "hypocrisy". He said: "The thing that makes us angry is the distinction between what they say and what they do." He taunted Ms Harman's shadow cabinet colleagues for failing to support her, and said: "What we have seen this week is the irresistible force of parental obligation meeting the immovable object of political correctness." Labour MPs complained that it seemed as though the wrong minister was speaking, and even the deputy speaker, Michael Morris, admitted he had not heard the word "health" mentioned up to that point in Mr Dorrell's speech. John Sykes, Conservative MP for Scarborough, was the first to try and put Ms Harman off her stride. He asked: "Isn't it a good thing there's no such thing as a grant-maintained hospital - wouldn't you be in more trouble in that case?" Ms Harman hit back: "I'm surprised you weren't rising to complain to Stephen Dorrell about the fact that in your own health region, 7,500 hospital beds have been closed. I believe that is what your constituents want you to be speaking up about in this House of Commons, rather than making cheap points."

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International peace team suggests two track approach to beat impasse on decommissioning of paramilitary arms

# Mitchell puts aside weapons issue

Lawrence Donegan

**T**HE Government should abandon its demand that paramilitaries in Northern Ireland give up their weapons before all-party talks begin, the international commission on the peace process said yesterday.

The three-man panel, headed by former United States senator George Mitchell, concluded that terrorist groups would not give up their arms before negotiations and said any decommissioning of weapons should run in tandem with peace talks.

"Such an approach represents a compromise," the panel said. "If the peace process is to move forward the impasse must be overcome. While both sides have been adamant in their positions, both have repeatedly expressed their desire to move forward. This approach provides them that opportunity."

Any future disarmament should be monitored and verified by a separate body, appointed by the British and Irish governments but independent of both.

The commission also identified a number of other initiatives, including the setting up of an "elective body", which might help strengthen the peace process.

In its 20-page report to the British and Irish governments, Mr Mitchell's team said although relations between the two communities were strained, there was almost universal support for disarmament of all paramilitary groups.

It called on all sides to forget their "vast inventories of historical recrimination" and said: "What is really needed is a decommissioning of mind-sets."

The commission said all parties involved in future peace talks would have to accept six key principles before a political settlement could be reached, including the use of exclusively peaceful means to resolve political issues, disarmament, agreement to abide by the outcome of all-party negotiations and an end to punishment hearings.

It added: "Those who insist on prior decommissioning need to be reassured that the commitment to peaceful and democratic means by those formerly supportive of politically motivated violence is

## Principles

All parties must accept six principles before a settlement can be reached:

- The democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues.
- The total disarmament of paramilitary organisations.
- Independent verification of the disarmament process.
- The renunciation of violence and opposition to any other group using force or threat of force to influence negotiations.
- Agreement to abide by the terms of any agreement reached in all-party negotiations and use of democratic and peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect of the outcome with which they may disagree.
- An end to "punishment" killings and beatings.

genuine and irreversible and that the threat or use of such violence will not be invoked to influence the process of negotiations or to change any agreed settlement.

"Those who have been persuaded to abandon violence for the peaceful political path need to be reassured that a meaningful and inclusive process of negotiation is genuinely being offered to address the legitimate concerns of their traditions and the need for new political arrangements with which all can identify."

"Clearly, this new approach must be explored to overcome this impasse," the report said.

Mr Mitchell and his colleagues, Canadian general John de Chastelain and the former Finnish prime minister Harri Holkeri, published their findings yesterday after meetings with officials, politicians and church leaders.

They had found relations between the two traditions in Northern Ireland still hostile, yet it was clear the vast majority of the people wanted to turn away from the past. "There is a powerful desire for peace. It is that desire which creates the present opportunity," they said.

"Notwithstanding 'punishment' killings and beatings, observance of the ceasefire should not be devalued. It is a significant factor which must be given due weight in assessing the commitment of paramilitaries to full and verifiable decommissioning."



George Mitchell, flanked by John de Chastelain and Harri Holkeri, in Belfast yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: CRISPIN RODWELL

## Trust built on compromise holds key to peace

Mitchell report offers hope of wider 'twin-track' dialogue

David Sharrock  
Ireland Correspondent

**T**HE Mitchell Report's admirers claim it has mapped a decent route to a final settlement in Northern Ireland, but Irish nationalists will be inclined to complain that John Major has suddenly seized the wheel and changed destination with

his endorsement of Unionist proposals for a new Northern Ireland "elective body".

This round, it appears, has gone to David Trimble, the Unionist Party leader. Certainly John Hume, the SDLP leader, lost no time in complaining that Mr Major was buying votes to keep himself in power.

But the Prime Minister's initiative came as no surprise

to Irish nationalists, and in Dublin some viewed it as a logical trade-off — reasoning it would have been unimaginable for the Government and Mr Trimble to concede on the issue of weapons without getting something back.

Mr Hume's view is that assemblies have come and gone in the past 25 years and solved nothing; it is time for the parties and the two governments to negotiate a deal and then submit it to the people. Unionists, meanwhile, merely want a return to the old Stormont days as a way of

resisting stronger north-south ties through new all-Ireland institutions.

But John Bruton, the Irish prime minister, said Mr Major's announcement was something that could be discussed on the political side of the so-called "twin-track" approach running until the end of February, involving preliminary dialogue while the Mitchell report investigates the arms issue. This is, though, a come-on to Mr Trimble, who has resisted invitations to talk to Dublin.

Although Mr Trimble said

## Divide and rule

Northern Ireland's troubled electoral history

Parliament elected at Stormont, governing the province, following the partition of Ireland. Successive administrations formed by Unionist majority, with nationalists and republicans intermittently boycotting proceedings.

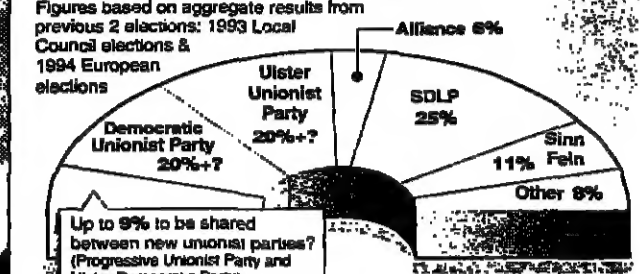
Direct rule imposed by Westminster after Bloody Sunday shootings and upsurge in IRA violence. Stormont parliament dissolved.

Power sharing executive of local parties elected but collapsed within four months amidst the loyalist-inspired Ulster workers' strike.

78 member assembly elected by proportional representation but proved unworkable. Nationalist SDLP took part in election but refused to take their seats.

Mitchell commission proposes an "elective body" for further negotiations to "contribute to the building of confidence".

## A possible convention line-up



- Elections would be for party delegations to a new negotiating body. Based on proportional representation, it would — according to the Mitchell report — be "within the three-strand structure" of the peace process.
- The body would exist for a limited duration and provide a forum for, or means of, moving the process forward into full inter-party talks. It would not be an assembly to govern the province.
- Sinn Féin and the SDLP have already criticised plans for any elected assembly which they fear would be Unionist dominated.

but the governments may insist it has a stronger role as a negotiating body for reaching an agreed settlement. If so, Sinn Féin might be persuaded to participate.

In the meantime, some Unionists appeared to surprise even themselves when they found much to commend in the report, imbued as it is with compromise.

But the real key to success is trust. As panel member Harri Holkeri said yesterday, the paramilitaries' position is "we do not trust, but we are prepared to try".

## Reactions from fury to support

### Sinn Féin

**T**HE brevity of a statement issued by Gerry Adams said it all. In his reaction to the Mitchell Report "John Major has effectively dumped the twin-track process," he said.

"He is quite clearly acting in bad faith by swapping one precondition to all-party talks for another. John Major has now adopted an entirely Unionist agenda in an attempt to buy Unionist votes in Westminster."

Off-stage, senior republicans were first stunned then furious at the "stunt" pulled by Mr Major. The twin-track approach of an independent body on arms and prelimi-

nary political dialogue had been sold to them as a means of commencing negotiations by the end of February.

Now that deadline has been pushed right back into an indefinite future.

"He's just swapped one precondition for another, dumped the twin-track, dumped a target date," said a senior source.

"What Major did today did not contribute in any way to building the trust and confidence that he's supposed to be looking for," said another.

In a mood which seemed close to despair, the party was last night facing a return to the drawing board — and the danger of being accused by their headline critics of naivety.

### Unionists

**I**T WAS a good day for David Trimble, who started off by expressing disappointment over the failure of the Mitchell Commission to solve the impasse in the peace process but ended it with his view that an elected body as the only way forward seemingly endorsed by Mr Major.

"In view of the refusal of Sinn Féin/IRA to make the necessary moves with regard to weapons, we regard it as the only way forward," Mr Trimble told the House of Commons.

Earlier his colleague, Ken Maginnis, gave the Mitchell Report a cautious welcome, which gave rise to speculation that the Unionists have come out of yesterday's developments in an even stronger position than they had hoped for.

But the Irish Government's response is contingent upon Mr Trimble's meeting them for talks, something which he has so far refused to do.

It is likely that unless he is prepared, and quickly, to accept an invitation from the Irish foreign minister, Dick Spring, who has already expressed his view that an election is a "flawed" plan, for a meeting then over their limited support will be lost.

### Opposition

**T**ONY Blair and Paddy Ashdown voiced immediate Opposition support for the Mitchell Report and for John Major's formula for side-stepping the weapons stalemate with an elected assembly. But Mr Blair also hinted that if the Labour's options did not work he should try others.

Insisting that the issues involved "should transcend normal party politics", the Labour leader stressed the importance of "confidence-building" measures and offered help in passing speedy

legislation to create an assembly.

Mr Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, criticised the courage of all involved, and proposed a special amnesty for stocks of Semtex.

Labour's Northern Ireland spokesman, Mo Mowlam, supports an assembly if it proves an effective means of ending the deadlock, though Ham-mersmith MP Clive Soley voiced nationalist fears that it would mean a return to "structures that have failed in the past" and Tony Benn insisted that the peace process in South Africa and Palestine had not required prior arms decommissioning.

### SDLP

**T**HE bitterest exchanges in the Commons yesterday reflected John Hume's memories of being a member of three failed assemblies in Northern Ireland and his openly-voiced suspicion that Mr Major was trying to buy time and buy Unionist votes to keep his government afloat.

His deputy in the mainly Catholic Social and Democratic Labour Party, Seamus Mallon, was less caustic but warned that Mr Major had ignored the

main thrust of the Mitchell Report — that talks and decommissioning should proceed side-by-side.

Both were angry last night, but senior Tories were cheered by their refusal to rule out the assembly completely. "Give them 72 hours," said one.

There were Tory cries of "cheer" when Mr Hume obliquely taunted Mr Major with risking innocent lives by this tactic and went on to remind MPs that the Mitchell Commission had not positively endorsed the idea of an assembly, which was "outside its remit".

### Duncan Campbell Crime Correspondent

**T**HE IRA ceasefire has brought savings of more than £250 million for UK shops and stores, according to figures published yesterday.

But retail outlets were nevertheless targets of more than 8,000 terrorist incidents, mainly connected with animal rights, the latest annual survey of the British Retail Consortium has found.

The cost of crime against retailers has fallen overall by 28 per cent but robberies and till thefts have increased.

David Maclean, Home Office minister, said the figures were as impressive as those for the

best police forces in terms of cutting crime. It proved that retailers were not helpless in the face of crime; if they "can do it, everyone can".

The survey is based on responses from companies trading through 83,000 outlets, with a combined annual turnover of £81 billion.

It shows losses from terrorism in 1994/95 to be down by 98 per cent from £228 million in 1993/94 to £4.5 million last year. But retailers faced 3,140 incidents of terrorism, as defined by the survey, including bombs, bomb threats, incendiary attacks and attacks by animal rights activists.

The 28 per cent fall in the overall cost of crimes against retailers — £1.5 billion in

1994/95 compared with £2.1 billion the previous year — came at a cost of £25 million for prevention measures.

Thefts totalling 5,390,341 represented a 12 per cent rise. The number of customers referred to police was up by 250,000 to 783,861. Staff theft or fraud was down 24 per cent to 26,144 incidents; 41 per cent of employees involved were referred to police.

There were 15,838 robberies and till snatches, up 17 per cent and the figure of most concern to retailers, a fall of 2 per cent.

Violence against staff remained high, said David Quarmby, joint managing director of J Sainsbury plc and

chairman of the Home Office Retail Action Group for Crime Prevention, at the survey's launch in London.

A total of 11,640 staff suffered physical violence, down 4 per cent, but threats of violence increased to nearly 100,000 and 342,716 staff suffered verbal abuse.

Fraud losses amounted to £22 million. Cheque fraud was down by 83 per cent and plastic card fraud by 80 per cent. Loss from counterfeit notes totalled £1 million.

The report recommends making thieves reimburse their victims.

Retail Crime Costs, 1994/95; BRC, Bedford House, 68 Fulham High St, SW6 3JW; £25.

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Taipei's campaign for greater international recognition has provoked clear threats of military action, Patrick Tyler in Beijing reports

# Beijing warns of war for 'one China'

**T**HE Chinese leadership has sent unusually explicit warnings to the Clinton administration that it has completed plans for a limited attack on Taiwan which could be mounted in the weeks after President Lee Teng-hui's expected victory in the island's first democratic presidential election in March.

This sabre-rattling is apparently intended to persuade the United States to rein in Taiwan and Mr Lee, whose push for greater international recognition for the island of 21 million people has been condemned in Beijing as a drive for independence.

While no one familiar with the threat thinks that China

## The People's Liberation Army 'had plans to launch one conventional missile a day against Taiwan for 30 days'

Chas Freeman Jr, who visited China this winter for discussions with senior Chinese officials.

On January 4, after returning to Washington, he told Mr Clinton's national security adviser, Anthony Lake, that the People's Liberation Army had prepared plans to launch one conventional missile a day against Taiwan for 30 days.

This warning followed similar statements relayed to administration officials by John Lewis, a Stanford University political scientist who fre-

quently meets senior Chinese military figures here.

The warnings do not mean that an attack on Taiwan is certain or imminent. Rather, a number of China specialists say, China hopes through "credible preparations" for an attack to intimidate the Taiwanese and influence US policy towards Taiwan.

The goal, they say, is to force Taiwan to abandon Mr Lee's campaign, including his effort to get Taiwan a seat at the United Nations, and to send high-profile foreign visits by Mr Lee.

If the threats fail to rein in Mr Lee, a number of experts say, China could resort to force.

Since last summer, when the White House allowed Mr Lee to visit the US, the Chinese leadership has stepped up its attacks on the Taiwan leader, accusing him of seeking to "split the motherland" and undermine the "one China" policy which has been the bedrock of relations between Beijing and its estranged province since 1949.

Last month a senior Chinese foreign ministry official

said privately that China's obvious preparations for military action were intended to head off an unwanted conflict.

"We have been trying to do all we can to avoid a scenario in which we are confronted in the end with no other option but a military one," he said. If China did not succeed in changing Taiwan's course, "then I am afraid there is going to be a war".

Mr Freeman passed on the most recent warning during a meeting Mr Lake had called with non-governmental China specialists.

Participants said his presentation was arresting. Preparations for a missile attack on Taiwan, including the selection of targets, were complete and awaited a final decision by the politburo, he told them.

He quoted a Chinese official as saying that China could act militarily against Taiwan without fear of US intervention because US leaders "care more about Los Angeles than they do about Taiwan" — a statement that Mr Freeman described as an indirect threat to use nuclear weapons against the US.

Mr Freeman confirmed the gist of his reported remarks, reiterating his belief that while Beijing clearly preferred negotiation to combat

there was a new sense of urgency about its wish to end Taiwan's quest for "independent international status".

He said Mr Lee's behaviour in the weeks following his reelection would determine whether Beijing's Communist Party leaders felt they must act "by direct military means".

In recent months, Mr Freeman said, he had relayed a number of warnings to US government officials. "I have quoted senior Chinese who told me [that China] would sacrifice millions of men and 'entire cities' to assure the unity of China and who opined that the United States would not make comparable sacrifices." — New York Times.

## Police break up subway squat

**E**ric Talmadge in Tokyo

**H**UNDREDS of police dragged homeless men kicking and screaming from a central Tokyo shantytown yesterday, an unusually harsh crackdown which shocked passers-by.

The melée capped months of rising tension between the city authority and those living in "cardboard villages" — a row of shacks several hundred yards long in an underpass.

By yesterday afternoon most of the homeless had left or had been forcibly removed, and only three arrests were reported. But the clash focused attention on a social problem most Japanese — who take great pride in their country's affluence — would prefer to ignore.

"I am very disappointed that forces had to be used," said Yukio Aoshima, Tokyo's governor. "But we intend to do our best to help rehabilitate these people."

The authorities are trying to house the tunnel dwellers in a temporary shelter, but this will be closed after two months, Mr Aoshima said. Officials hoped to "talk to the homeless to better understand their situation".

Few of them are likely to co-operate, however. A hall of eggs, beer cans and tin buckets rained down on the police as they broke through the barricade of plywood and concrete blocks put up by the homeless and their supporters, many bussed in from outside Tokyo.

"We're not going to a concentration camp, the homeless men shouted. 'We're staying right here.'"

Tension between the authorities and the homeless has increased since the city announced last year that it would clear out the cardboard shacks to build a new railway station under the underpass, which links Tokyo's city hall and sev-

eral high-rise office blocks with one of the city's busiest railway stations.

The plan was immediately criticised by campaign groups as an excuse to remove the men.

"The city has never tried to understand us," said Mitsuru Koki, who recently moved out of the underpass and survives on state benefits. "Most Japanese don't think of homeless people, or people who don't work, as fellow human beings."

Begging is rare in Japan, and there is hardly any contact between the homeless and the pedestrians, mostly white-collar workers, who pass them each day.

The clash focused attention on a problem Japan prefers to ignore.

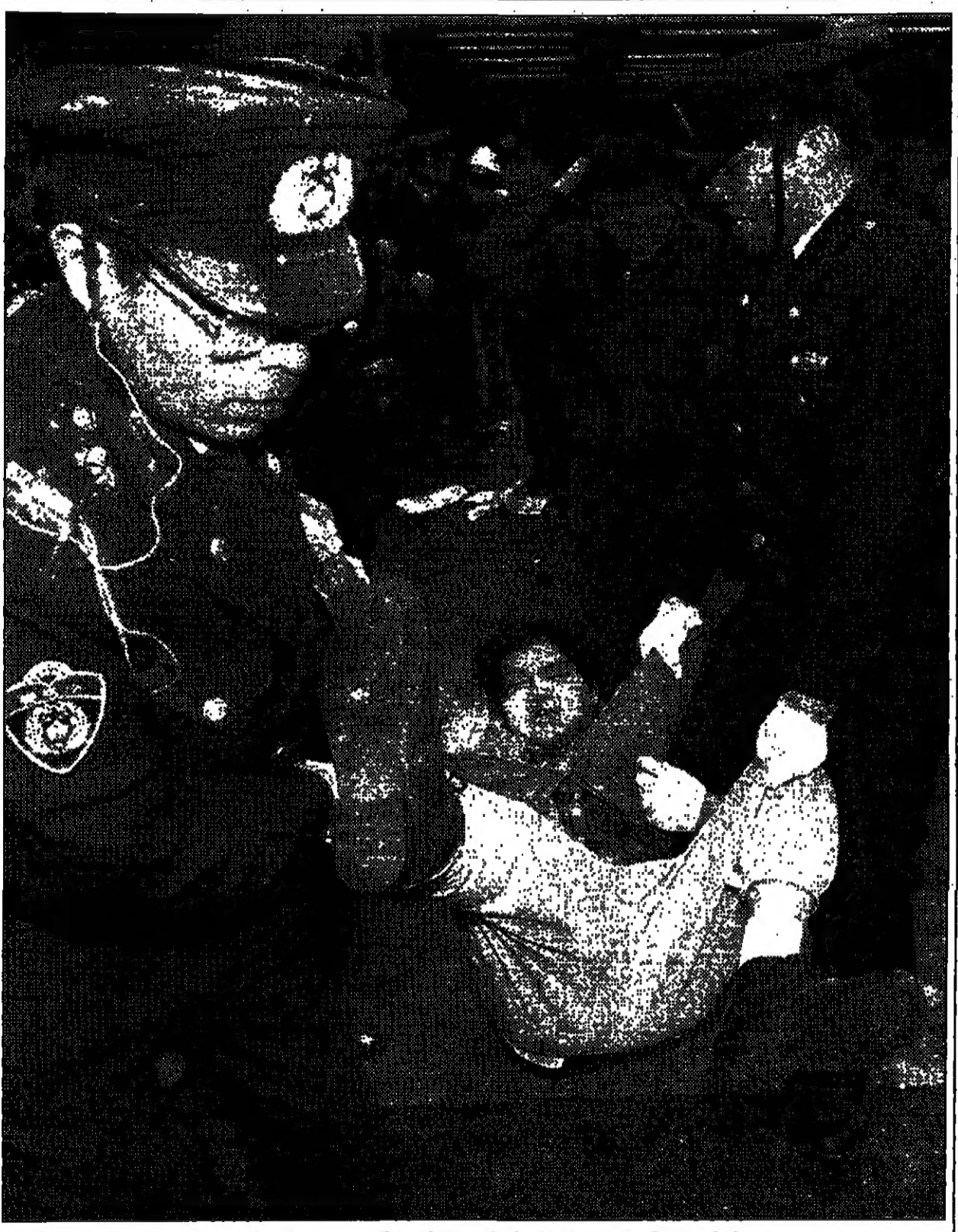
None the less, the underpass community had long been a conspicuous pocket of poverty in Tokyo, a city with few slums.

About 200 people, mostly older unemployed men or day labourers, lived there, and hundreds more lived nearby. Although their number fluctuated, it is believed to have gradually increased in recent years because of a prolonged recession.

Shopkeepers near the cardboard village had long complained that the stench and squalor of the shacks scared off customers. The police repeated that message through megaphones.

"You have become a nuisance to the neighbourhood," blared one. "This is not a place for people to live."

The most recent official estimate is that there are less than 3,500 homeless people throughout Tokyo, which has a population of 12 million. But private welfare groups say there could be 10,000 or more. — AP.



Can't go, won't go... Tokyo police drag away a homeless protester during yesterday's eviction PHOTOGRAPH: ITSUO INOUE

## Comeback Kid slays them

**A**gainst all odds, Bill Clinton's state of the union speech was a hit, reports Martin Walker

**P**RESIDENT Bill Clinton scored top marks yesterday as the American public and media dismissed the powerful state of the union address, delivered in the teeth of his wife's highly-publicised troubles over the Whitewater affair.

"The president was at his best," Tom Gilliam, a Republican county chairman in Florida, said yesterday. "What struck me was the physical strength and vigour of a man in campaign mode — while Senator [Robert] Dole's reply was lame and tired."

He added: "Republicans were calling round to each other after the speeches, and kind of wept on each other's shoulders. Clinton is going to be very, very hard to beat. And I think everyone in the country, whatever their politics, took their hat off to him for that moving tribute to his wife."

During Tuesday night's address the president departed from his script to look up at his wife in the balcony, and salute her as "a wonderful wife and magnificent mother and a great First Lady".

Others had been seized into his bag of tricks and pulled out something for everybody. He sounded like a Republican. Dole didn't project a future under Republicans.

A straw poll on Connecticut Avenue in Washington yesterday revealed that most people had watched Mr Clinton's speech, and found something to admire. Everyone recalled his statement about his wife.

Luther Willis, a caretaker, said: "I liked what he said about bringing back school uniforms, so kids stop shooting each other for fancy jackets. And then all the extra cops on the street — that's good stuff."

Stephen Ribachonek, a financial officer, said: "I'll vote for him again after that speech. He came across as genuine, while the Republicans seem to have a hidden agenda."

But Mr Dole's speech in reply to the president's address, which suggested Mr Clinton always promised more than he could deliver, provoked some reaction.

"Clinton promised us health care, and that sank without trace, and he promised to be the candidate of change, and nothing's changed, that I can see, so I don't believe a word he says," said Jason Wild, an investment analyst.

"I think the president has moved so far towards the Republicans that we can't really call him a Democrat any more," said Philip Moser, a retired librarian.

Nyrita Merrill, a black manicurist who was registered to vote for the first time last year, said: "Nothing the president said made me want to vote for him, except that he was so sweet to his wife. But I wouldn't vote Republican."

Mr Clinton's statement that "the era of big government is over" infuriated Republicans watching him claim the credit for what they see as their schism in Washington from him a promise to balance the budget in seven years.

"The speech was about one quarter Ronald Reagan, about two-thirds Lyndon Johnson and about 10 per cent George McGovern," said Newt Gingrich, the Speaker of the House and a Republican. "Anybody could read the part they liked and be thrilled, or read the part they didn't like and be worried."

The media overwhelmingly declared Mr Clinton's speech a success, and Mr Dole's a disappointment. This was partly because expectations were rather low for a presidency overshadowed by the ordeal faced on Friday by Mrs Clinton, who has been subpoenaed to testify before the Whitewater grand jury.

'Republicans were calling round after and wept on each other's shoulders'

González associate faces 'dirty war' trial

### News in brief

**US food agency approves zero-calorie fat**

**T**HE United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) yesterday approved America's first zero-calorie artificial fat.

The product, olestra, developed by Procter & Gamble, can be used to replace the fat in crisps and other snacks, provided they carry a warning on the label that it might cause unexpected side effects.

Critics had asked the FDA to keep olestra off the market because it can have unpleasant gastro-intestinal effects, including diarrhoea, and can deplete the body's stock of certain vitamins and nutrients.

But the FDA decided olestra was safe enough for consumers to decide for themselves whether to eat it.

Olestra is a synthetic chemical made of sugar and vegetable oil. Its molecules are too large and tightly packed to digest, allowing it to pass through the body without clogging arteries or remaining as body fat.

One ounce of crisps has 150 calories, but olestra crisps have just 60 calories.

But olestra can act as a laxative, causing gastro-intestinal disturbances, and can rob the body of vitamins A, D, E and K. The FDA is requiring Procter & Gamble to supplement foods containing olestra with the four vitamins. — AP.

**Iraq opposes US talks site**

**I**raq would like its talks with the United Nations on selling limited amounts of oil to be held outside the United States, diplomats in Baghdad said yesterday.

They said Iraq wanted the talks held away from the clamour of media and direct US supervision. — Reuter.

**Bahrain arrests**

A London-based opposition group claimed yesterday that at least 2,000 people have been arrested in dawn raids and during clashes with police since renewed unrest erupted in Bahrain last week. — AP.

**Chechen rebels release 45 hostages taken in Dagestan**

**C**HECHEN rebels yesterday released 45 hostages seized in a raid in the Russian region of Dagestan, Interfax news agency said, quoting a Dagestani official.

Buses with 45 hostages crossed the Chechen-Dagestan border at around 1700 Moscow time (2pm GMT) in the direction of Khasavyurt, it quoted the head of the administration of the Khasavyurt district as saying.

Interfax news agency said the hostages had been handed over to Dagestani officials in the eastern Chechen town of Novogrozny. The bodies of 42 rebels killed in last week's raid were handed over to the Chechen rebels.

Some of the hostages had been seized on January 9, when the rebels herded 2,000 people into a hospital in the Dagestani town of Kizlyur.

Others had been seized in the village of Perovomyskaya near the Chechen-Dagestan border, where the convoy of rebels and hostages was surrounded by Russian troops.

Six Russian soldiers were killed and two wounded in attacks by separatist rebels on Russian positions in Chechnya in the 24 hours up to yesterday afternoon, Interfax said. — Reuter.

**French police eye cybercafe**

**F**RENCH police said yesterday they had paid an informal visit to a provincial "cybercafe" after it fed into the worldwide Internet computer network a banned book on the late President François Mitterrand's battle with cancer.

The book, which was put on the Internet by the owner of the Café Pascal Barbraud, was banned at the request of Mitterrand's family on the grounds of medical secrecy and privacy laws.

It was written by Mitterrand's doctor Claude Guibler and says the president lied about his illness for 11 years.

Publishers Plon said they were against the move to put *Le Grand Secret* (The Big Secret) on the Internet.

The police inspector said the visit was "a reconnaissance visit" rather than a judicial act. — Reuter.

**US to help North Korea**

**T**HE United States is ready to send humanitarian aid to North Korea, where 130,000 people are reported to face starvation, a senior US official said yesterday.

Winston Lord, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, told a Manila news conference he would discuss North Korea's plight with Japanese and South Korean officials in Hawaii.

Mr Lord said UN missions to North Korea were reporting serious shortages. "We have to take this as being a very credible problem."

The International Federation of the Red Cross has said that more international aid is needed to feed North Koreans on the brink of starvation and living in makeshift shelters in bitter weather.

Mr Lord said: "I would hope we could agree in responding in a humanitarian way." — Reuter.

**Sauna trauma as sight of naked ladies has Finnish men steaming**

**U**NACCUSTOMED to the sight of bare female bodies in their traditionally segregated saunas, overheated Finnish men have behaved so badly that a sports complex offering mixed bathing has been forced to jettison the sexes, writes Jon Henley in Helsinki.

"We wanted an international ambience, the first mixed sauna in town," said Mona Helin, a sales manager at the complex in Toole, a Helsinki suburb.

"They do it in other countries, why not here? We were obviously naive."

Finnish take an average 1.5 saunas a week. But men and women rarely bathe together unless they are related, and the novelty of a mixed sauna was clearly too much for some male visitors.

"When they first started wandering across to the women, we put up a railing," Ms Helin said. "They walked round it, so we built a low partition. They jumped that too. Now we've got a five-foot high plate-glass wall across the whole room and some of them still manage to get over."

Ms Helin said the sauna was refusing to admit men who try to cross the barrier. "It's either that or an electric fence," she said.

**European plan aims to pull UN back from bankruptcy**

**B**RTAIN and France unveiled a plan yesterday to resolve the United Nations' financial crisis, involving an increase in contributions from Japan and Germany.

Put forward on behalf of the European Union, the detailed proposals opened negotiations on revamping the UN's finances by the summer.

The talks are part of a wider discussion about overhauling the UN, including the enlargement of the Security Council.

The European plan comes amid warnings that the UN — hobbled by late payment, especially by the United States — will run out of money in April.

The reform of current contributions to the UN's regular and peacekeeping budgets is an attempt to meet Washington's objections that it is paying too much towards peacekeeping. Partly because of this, the US is \$1.2 billion (£750 million) in arrears.

Under yesterday's proposals, American contributions towards peacekeeping would drop from 31 per cent to 28.75 per cent of the peacekeeping budget.

The difference would be picked up mainly by Japan, whose share would rise from 15.5 per cent to 17.7 per cent.

Its contributions to the regular budget would rise correspondingly.

The contribution of Britain, which gives about £160 million towards the regular and peacekeeping budgets, would be reduced slightly. Peacekeeping contributions from the G77 bloc of 132 developing countries would rise from 1.9 per cent to 4.70 per cent.

British officials argue that the plan is fair because it proposes an increase in contributions from countries with high economic growth rates — such as the Asian tigers. Conversely, Russia, which has suffered grave economic deterioration, would enjoy a big drop in its contributions.

Because of the financial crisis, the UN secretary-general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has been forced to fund emergency peacekeeping funds to finance routine expenses.

The crux of the problem remains late US payments. The Republican congress is in no hurry to pay up.

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سنة ١٤١٧



# Bonn battle to halve jobless

Ian Traynor in Bonn

**C**HANCELLOR Helmut Kohl yesterday launched an ambitious campaign to tackle the structural crisis confronting Germany's sluggish economy and to halve unemployment, now approaching 4 million, or 10 per cent of the workforce, by the end of the decade.

A jobs summit in Bonn bringing together key government figures, trade union leaders, and industrial bosses approved an eight-page manifesto pledging all sides to a consensus in the battle for jobs and competitiveness and in the wider long-term task of retooling the country's social and economic model for the next century.

"This is an important, positive signal, a good signal for everyone in Germany," said Friedrich Kohl, head of the chancellor's office.

But amid an increasing sense of job insecurity, business gloom, and political paralysis, the challenges of converting yesterday's verbal assurances into concrete results look daunting.

The government and both sides of industry committed themselves to the timetable for a single European currency, scheduled for launch at the beginning of 1999, and said it would boost growth and jobs across the continent.

The proposals outlined yesterday included tax breaks for new businesses, company tax changes, pensions and job training reform, and easier access to risk capital.

The unions promised wage restraint in return for employers taking on more workers.

The vague wish-list is to be

reshed out next week when the cabinet unveils the fine print of its 'action programme' for jobs and its report on the economy for 1996.

The summit comes as Europe's key economy moves towards stagnation, if not recession, threatening to drag the rest of Europe, notably France, with it and jeopardising the best-laid plans for monetary union by 1999, despite the ritual affirmations of faith in the project in Germany.

Falling consumption, a reluctance of foreigners to invest in Germany's high-price economy, the flight of capital and jobs abroad for the same reasons, an overvalued mark that is hurting exports and jobs, all leave the government with little room for manoeuvre.

The constraints are worsened by the public spending cuts needed to bring the budget deficit down from 1995's 3.6 per cent to make the single-currency deficit ceiling of 3 per cent by the end of next year.

That leaves little to spare to prime the economy and boost jobs and growth.

Independent analysts expect only 1 per cent growth this year, although next week's government report is expected to be a bit more optimistic.

Official unemployment is scraping the 4 million point and rising, but the real numbers of those out of work is nearer 6 million.

"The time for talking is past," said Friedrich Rezzrot, the economics minister.

The manifesto said: "There is an acute need for action. That is shown by the low foreign investment in Germany while German companies are increasingly moving abroad."

## Russia set to join Council of Europe despite Chechen war

John Palmer in Brussels

**T**HE Council of Europe will today approve Russia's membership of the 38-country organisation, which was set up to advance democracy and human rights. But international concern about Russia's human rights record and its war against the Chechens increased yesterday after the resignation of a leading human rights activist from President Boris Yeltsin's administration.

European governments want the parliamentary assembly of the Strasbourg-based Council of Europe to accept Russia as a member in the hope that it will shore up President Yeltsin's standing before the presidential election this summer. Mr Yeltsin said this week that a refusal would deal a blow to pro-reformers, but he also vowed to step up the war against the Chechens.

The Russian government applied last year to join the council, which is sometimes seen as an organisation to help countries prepare politically for eventual European Union membership. But its application was suspended in protest at the Russian army's brutal storming of Grozny.

At the same time a council investigation commission reported that serious human rights abuses persisted in the Russian legal and police system.

Last September the council's assembly agreed to lift the suspension after the tentative ceasefire in Chechnya. It is to vote on Russia's application today.

But the human rights advocate Sergei Kovalev, who resigned from the Russian government this week, called on the council to demand a Russian pledge to begin peace talks with Chechen separatists and withdraw troops from Chechnya as conditions of entry.

"A negative vote would create a political curtain between the two parts of Europe," said the Communist Party leader, Gennady Zyuganov. "Russia is part of Europe, a legitimate child and not a bastard."

## Poland's PM resigns after spy charges inquiry starts

Matthew Brzezinski in Gdansk

**T**HE Polish prime minister, Jozef Oleksy, resigned yesterday after military prosecutors decided to launch an official inquiry into allegations that he spied for Moscow.

"A propaganda uproar against me and my party is doing harm to Poland's good name," Mr Oleksy said on television last night, appearing emotional and angry. He said: "In the name of reasons of state, I am resigning."

The resignation of Mr Oleksy, a former communist, came as no surprise after weeks of acrimonious and often wild accusations against the leftwing coalition government.

After military prosecutors said yesterday that alleged evidence of his contacts with foreign agents justified a formal investigation, his departure was widely expected.

"I resign because I am innocent," Mr Oleksy told Poles. "I don't want anyone to suspect that I want to hide behind a high government position to cover anything up. I do not fear the investigation. I need it."

He was parliament's Speaker before he became prime minister early last year.

The military prosecutor, Wlodzislaw Potelch, said that if the investigation resulted in formal charges, prosecutors would seek the lifting of his parliamentary immunity. The maximum penalty he could face is death.

Mr Oleksy said the accusations, which first surfaced in December as Lech Walesa handed over the presidency to his party colleague Aleksander Kwasniewski, were part of "a brutal fight for power" by those who lost the elections.

He has, however, admitted having close social contacts with Vladimir Alganov, a long-serving Soviet diplomat in Warsaw who turned out to be a KGB colonel.

Mr Walesa said yesterday that the wider issue was the close ties that ex-communists had forged with Soviet officials when Warsaw was Moscow's satellite. These, he warned, could now be exploited by the Russians.



Shared grief... Sadika Hajrull, right, a Muslim, is told by her sister that their mother died during Sadika's three-year incarceration by a Serb woman. PHOTOGRAPH WAZE GOODARD

# One-woman camp frees its sole prisoner

Julian Borger in Obrovac reports on a Serb mother's long war of attrition

**F**OR three long years, the cottage at the crest of the hill in this Serb hamlet near Sarajevo was Bosnia's smallest, strangest prison camp. Under its red-tiled roof, a single jailer watched over a single prisoner. Both were women made desperate by the war.

It was like a dark, Balkan fairy tale. Tomanja Kukricar — aged 72, white-haired but tough — would come to the door of the house, wiping her hands on her apron, smiling as she ushered guests inside. She would ply them, with baked potatoes, biscuits and brandy while, a few feet below, her prisoner of war spent the night in a damp basement.

Sadika Hajrull, aged 52, is a Muslim who had the misfortune of living in a Serb suburb of Sarajevo when the war

started. The Muslim-led government imprisoned Mrs Kukricar's daughter, a Serb activist, so the Serb police came looking for a hostage. They found Mrs Hajrull and took her to Mrs Kukricar.

They said her incarceration would last only five days, but that was back in February 1993. Mrs Hajrull was freed on Tuesday night as a small but significant part of the Bosnian peace process.

Yesterday she sat weeping at her sister's house in Sarajevo. Her sister Izeta had just told her that their mother had died a few days earlier. Mrs Hajrull had been so overjoyed about her freedom, the previous evening that Izeta could not bear to break the news.

Their sick mother had tried to hang on long enough to see Sadika. Under the Dayton peace agreement, all prisoners were supposed to have been freed on Friday, but at the last moment the deal faltered and only 225 were released. Sadika was not among them, and it broke her mother's heart, Izeta said.

## US troops on alert for 'extremist attacks'

**U**NITED STATES troops in Bosnia are on "high alert" for possible extremist attacks, the defence secretary, William Perry, said yesterday.

The order follows a warning that extremists, including an American believed to be in Bosnia, might

launch an attack. Mr Perry said there were no reports of "terrorists or extremists actually trying to get into US facilities".

The order follows a warning that extremists, including an American believed to be in Bosnia, might

Kevin Holt or Clevon Holt, who had had contact with extremist Muslim groups, might be in Bosnia. Mr Perry said the US would not train and arm Bosnian government forces until all foreign troops, including Islamic volunteers, had left. — Reuter.

Over the three years in the cottage in Obrovac, the two women did the housework and the gardening together. They sat by the wood stove in winter and talked. A strange relationship developed in which the Muslim woman's role alternated between prisoner, servant and companion.

On Tuesday, before they knew Mrs Hajrull would be freed, they talked about the past like any couple who had lived through hard times together, interrupting each other, arguing about dates and facts. But when the Serb left the room, Mrs Hajrull pointed to her jaw and mouth: "She beat me."

Looking back on her years in captivity, Mrs Hajrull was close to tears. "I was afraid for my nerves, that I'd go crazy before I was let go."

Her husband was arrested at the start of the war and has been missing ever since. For her former jailer, she wished peace of mind. "I want to ask from the bottom of my heart that her daughter will be released and that everything will be finished. None among us was guilty."

# The bureaucrats we love to hate

Adela Cooch in Madrid

**T**HE Spanish supreme court yesterday charged a former interior minister and close associate of the prime minister, Felipe Gonzalez, with involvement in the 1988 "dirty war" against Basque separatists, severely damaging the ruling Socialist Party's electoral prospects.

José Barrionuevo will be tried after the election for kidnapping, misappropriation of state funds and membership of an illegal armed band. The court found evidence of his involvement in the 1983 kidnapping of a French businessman by the Anti-Terrorist Liberation Groups (GAL) — a hired gunman who killed 27 people during the "dirty war".

The severity of the charges against Mr Barrionuevo, interior minister during the period the GAL gunmen were active, is a heavy blow to the Socialists, who are trailing in the polls with six weeks to go to the general election.

The investigating magistrate, Eduardo Mener, had been expected to bring one charge at most against him, but the former minister now faces up to 40 years' prison. His conviction would have serious repercussions for Mr Gonzalez, establishing a direct link between the government and the GAL.

The prime minister has denied that he or any member of his administration knew about or condoned GAL activities and has said Mr Barrionuevo is innocent.

The Socialist Party said there were no plans to drop Mr Barrionuevo from the list of candidates in the March 8 election.

The indictment brings the affair closer to Mr Gonzalez than ever before — a campaign gift for the opposition and its leader, José María Aznar, who opinion polls say will win.

This is what makes it so alien and dangerous in the minds of Eurosceptics. They think it should be more like Whitehall and less like a French *fonctionnaires'* finishing school. If it has a political role it needs to be more accountable.

The commission's grand project has been nothing less than the future of Europe. It organised the drive to the single market and promoted enlargement. Its immediate goal is economic and monetary union, which many — even in its highest echelons — see as something of a disappointment. Jacques Santer says — now doubt will happen.

And yet the commission is the size of one of the more obscure Whitehall departments: fewer than 1,000 people plus 5,000 translators to serve the 368 million inhabitants of the EU. By comparison, the Department for Education and Employment has 5,500 staff.

We all know it spends billions; actually about 1.2 per cent of the combined gross domestic product of its member states and less than 2 per cent of the EU's total public expenditure. Only 5 per cent of the commission's outlay goes on administrative costs to fund those apparently lavish lifestyles.

So why all the fuss? Partly because Brussels sounds so foreign, despite being closer to London than Manchester is, and partly because the commission is made up of foreigners.

The Government is making a tardy effort to get more British civil servants recruited, but so far with limited success. "The British tend to think you should win through fair play, they don't network like the Italians and Spanish do," one British civil servant said. "The Spanish commissioners are busy filling their departments with Spaniards, but we still think that's rather beneath us."

also with the lorry transit permit agreement; secretive yet surprisingly open in releasing information; meritocratic and yet filling senior posts by national quotas.

The bureaucracy has always been variable: all acknowledge some real high-flyers, but also duds imposed by the quotas. There is a strict pecking order and promotion tends to depend on one's boss.

Things are more relaxed now than in Mr Delors' day, when a word out of place could lead to dismissal and the staff were so fearful of the president's benches that they worked all hours.

Some of the old French civil-service-type arrogance remains — knowing what is

best for the people of Europe without making any inconvenient reference to them — but it has taken a severe knock. The bureaucrats are unhappy about being so disabled and are trying to work out why.

They allow the police in now to investigate fraud and no longer insist on diplomatic immunity. Per Knudsen, the Danish head of the fraud unit, has been allowed to double his staff (to 130) and reckons they are tracking down a quarter of a billion case embezzled from the EU each year, mainly in fraudulent aid applications.

man in the right place at the right time.

A non-British commissioner said: "I cannot work out what Santer's game plan is. He's just said that monetary union is close to the centre of his heart, but that's terribly dangerous. What if it doesn't work? Does he have a fallback position? If not, where does that leave the commission?" Ask whether this commissioner believes there will be monetary union on January 1 1999, and the word "no" is mouthed.

But accountability remains elusive. Sir Leon Brittan, a former Conservative cabinet minister and Britain's senior commissioner, says a touch smugly, knowing he will

never again have to canvass on windswept doorsteps: "I am a politician, not a civil servant. I think the foundation of the commission was extremely ingenious. It is because it is charged with putting forward proposals and giving a certain dynamism that it is a political institution. I personally would be quite happy to stand for election."

Of course, he does not have to. The 20 commissioners are appointed for five-year terms by their national governments, largely from the ranks of senior politicians. The president can offer them portfolio but has no power to discipline or sack them. The commissioners are in charge of a civil service which is itself not elected and not answerable to the citizens in whose name it proposes laws and regulations.

Baroness Thatcher has famously jeered that Neil Kinnock was unable to get himself elected to anything in Britain but now yields more executive power in Brussels than he ever did before.

Mr Kinnock, the transport commissioner, points out the inconvenient truth at the heart of the Government's convenient Euroscepticism: "It sometimes makes me impatient that the representation of this place is one of a great nosy-parking bureaucracy issuing flats left, right and centre. There is insufficient consciousness that there can be no European law without the assent of the ministers of the European states."

Discounting the former prime minister's sour grapes, it is the accountability gap at the heart of the EU's central institutions which causes distrust and suspicion, not just in Britain but throughout the member states.

The parliament spends but does not tax. Its members are remote and often disengaged from their electorates. The Council of Ministers wheels and deals and horse-trades in deepest secrecy. And the commission and its leaders are not really responsible to anybody.

Britain supports enlargement to offer membership to the states of eastern Europe. With that will inevitably come more majority voting; unanimity will not be practicable if anything is ever to get done. The present Government accepts majority rule at home, so why not in the club it wants to belong to and benefit from? Does accountability just mean saying No?

Concluded.

**What makes Heat as much an event as a movie is that it teams Al Pacino and Robert De Niro, American cinema's two raging bulls turned sacred cows — and that's all the high-concept pitch it needs.**

Jonathan Romney



## Breaking the deadlock

Senator Mitchell has produced a valuable report

**IMPASSE** — what impasse? Last year the differences over weapons decommissioning in Northern Ireland seemed to have become intractable going on irreconcilable. Yesterday, within hours of the publication of the Mitchell report, they seemed to just blow away. By yesterday evening fresh clouds were beginning to gather, but the change of mood and the new spirit of optimism were unmistakable. By proposing a series of tough conditions for all parties entering future political talks, and by floating the possibility of an election to precede those talks, Senator Mitchell and his colleagues have done exactly what was required of them. They have got the deadlocked parties off the decommissioning hook they had been on for so long.

It would be wrong, however, to see the Mitchell report as merely a tactical contrivance. It also casts a genuinely fresh eye on the old problems. It sets out a coherent and pragmatic way of moving to proper talks by emphasising that the participants must sign up to six principled commitments. It lists a series of clear steps by which decommissioning can take place alongside the talks process. It underlines other important truths that any reasonable participant ought to accept, including a recognition of the need for an amnesty and for further action on prisoners, as well as a rebuttal of Sinn Fein's mischievous attempt to treat paramilitary and security force weaponry as equivalent. All this confirms the wisdom of inviting an international perspective to be brought into the Northern Ireland negotiations. Those who created the international body have done well.

The most immediate and grateful beneficiary of this process was undoubtedly the British government. Until yesterday, Britain was tied to the mast by Sir Patrick Mayhew's Washington speech last year, the third condition

of which required a beginning to weapons decommissioning before Sinn Fein and its loyalist equivalents could enter all-party political talks. For months, "Washington Three" had been London's irreducible condition for progress. Yesterday there was very little mention of Washington Three during a long and consensual hour of exchanges in the Commons. John Major seized on the brief 56th paragraph of the Mitchell report to propose that pre-negotiation elections can be a credible alternative route for the paramilitaries to reach the conference table. Conservative backbenchers who as recently as yesterday morning had claimed that Washington Three was non-negotiable suddenly went quiet. When it came to it, the Conservatives clearly preferred progress to preconditions.

But we are not out of the wood yet. The satisfied all-party mood at Westminster is not as hegemonic as it may appear. Even yesterday it was somewhat punctured by the SDLP's allegations that the government has chosen David Trimble's preferred solutions largely in order to secure Unionist support in the Commons. Sinn Fein's initial welcome for Mitchell also grew more guarded after Mr Major's statements. There is a danger that nationalist and republican opinion, suspicious of the implications and consequences of an election which will confirm their minority status in Northern Ireland, will dig in against this approach. Any election will be a credibility contest in the Catholic north between the SDLP and Sinn Fein, with much at stake for both parties. Southern Irish politicians who welcomed the report yesterday may find that the way that it has been accepted in London carries a sting in the tail for their longterm aspirations. The Mitchell report has freed up the peace process, but it may also contain the seeds of future confrontations.

## An unhealthy tax on learning

A £300 entry fee for university students should be opposed

**FORGET** selection at 11, there is a much more serious problem facing secondary school pupils: a possible £300 fee for students starting university this Autumn. And that's if they are lucky enough, with the recent freeze on numbers, to find a place. Faced with the steepest cuts since 1981, university vice chancellors are holding an emergency meeting next week having already held a summit with student leaders and lecturers last week. Savage though the 1981 squeeze was — labelled "illiterate, innumerate, miserable, negative and phillistine" by Robert Rhodes James, the eminent Conservative backbencher — the 1996 cuts are more serious. They follow 15 years of cuts and "efficiency savings". The point at which financial cuts affect the quality of courses has already been reached. A 25 per cent reduction in funding over the past five years, is now to be succeeded by 13 per cent over the next three. No wonder the Tories have invented a new education strategy à la Harman: divert and rule.

University heads are uniting behind a "graduate tax" as the solution to their underlying funding problems. A Guardian survey of 23 of the 104 vice-chancellors published today shows overwhelming support for this Australian approach under which students repay part of their tuition and maintenance costs at university once they begin to earn above a set level. Compared to the current loan system, a graduate tax would be cheaper to administer, less likely to deter, raise more revenue and

be far more equitable. But the scheme would need legislative action. Labour has yet to produce a higher education paper but has been as reluctant as the Tories to support the graduate tax. That the university vice chancellors are uniting behind the scheme is good news. They, too, have been divided shredding one radical plan and still consulting on another. In the last decade Britain has moved from an elite to a mass system of higher education. It is time it was properly funded.

The £300 entry fee for new students is a one-off emergency proposal from the vice chancellors to meet this Autumn's cash crisis. It should be opposed. So should the other option under discussion: boycotting quality control procedures. The fee would shut out students of high promise by deterring people from poor homes — and prompt a non-payment campaign on the campus destroying the present unity. The boycott would be equally counterproductive, easily dismissed by ministers as a self-serving tactic by vice chancellors wanting to cover up their inadequacies. More imagination is needed. And who better to provide it than students, who have far more experience in seeking to mobilise public support. A united march, begowned vice chancellors in their ermine alongside bejaunted students outside Parliament, would be a start. The aims should be twofold: maintain unity and ensure the public knows who is to blame: pusillanimous politicians who have passed the buck.

## Mr Bingley starts a price war

Building societies staying mutual may see virtue rewarded

**THE EMPIRE** strikes back. By cutting mortgage rates by 0.25 per cent to 7.24 per cent — the lowest for 25 years — the Bradford & Bingley will remind people that there is plenty of life left in mutual societies as long as they exploit their historic competitive advantage. Publicly quoted companies are, of course, a Good Thing, but that doesn't mean they should take over the world. British Gas isn't the only role model. There should be competition between types of businesses as well as between corporations. Mutual companies — owned by customers rather than outside shareholders — were spawned from Victorian self-help. Recently they have looked endangered as one after another opted for PLC status enabling them to distribute their reserves as shares. This provoked a scramble to open new accounts to qualify for a pot of gold.

Mutual societies that remain loyal to their noble ideals may have the last

laugh. As long as they control costs they are more competitive than banks because they don't shell out half of their profits as dividends. Instead, like B & B, they can use the cash to reduce interest rates or give bonuses to loyal depositors. According to Bank of England figures the average interest rate charged by building societies on deposits has been about one per cent below that of the banks during the past 10 years. Some might have done even better if they hadn't followed the banks into ill-advised diversifications like estate agency. If mutual societies sit tight there may be a renaissance around the corner. Once the tidal wave of money chasing building societies most likely to convert into PLCs has run its course, that money will be looking for a permanent home. If the traditional building societies continue to undercut the banks then the tidal wave may come back home again. To mutual advantage.



## Letters to the Editor

**A Nobel cause; needs refining**

**PROFESSOR** Joseph Rotblat (going to war on war, January 23) writes that "all inhabitants of the globe are becoming like one family". From the family's point of view, peace is a common interest and should override all others. However, in our global free-market economy it clearly does not. On the contrary, war is a very profitable business. Rotblat's human family will remain a dream unless we address the root cause.

Marguerite Morgan,  
24 Hammett Court,  
Weymouth Road,  
Monmouth,  
Gwent NP23 3JQ.

**TO ABOLISH** war, Rotblat seeks to "create a new mind-set", which turns out to be the old mind-set in a new guise: delete "loyalty to nation" and insert "loyalty to mankind". But in a world where so many other species are being exploited or exterminated, "my species, right or wrong" is not much better than "my country, right or wrong".

Philip Lloyd Lewis,  
57P Mallard Road,  
Bournemouth BH8 9PJ.

**SHOULD** like to suggest the following adaptation to Rotblat's final paragraph: "At a time when the action of a single species may endanger the whole planet, it is imperative to develop a loyalty to a greater whole."

Grace BlizadeL,  
Little Grove,  
Grove Lane,  
Chesham,  
Bucks HP5 3QQ.

## Nursery fare

**YOU** are right to highlight the fact that the nursery vouchers programme will help those who need it least (Tory disquiet over vouchers undermines Shephard's taints, January 23). The biggest beneficiaries are those who are already paying for a nursery education. They will win the education lottery to the tune of £1,100.

But what of the parents who can't afford to "top up" the voucher to buy a private nursery place? Many will get a voucher only to find that they can't cash it in.

The Government's "light touch" inspection regime will make it easy for the private, quick-buck merchants to set up shop in second-rate facilities without worrying about the quality of teaching.

It would have been far better to expand nursery education by building on what local education authorities have already put in place.

Mark Oakes,  
Media Relations Manager,  
Association of County Councils,  
Eaton House,  
65a Eaton Square,  
London SW1W 9BH.

**WISHED** to travel by rail from Feltham to Leamington Spa via London and was told the only fare available was £31. At Marylebone, I spotted posters offering London to Leamington Spa, any day, any train, £17 for a day return. On querying this, I was told to ask for a refund when I returned to Feltham. After much searching in fare tables, the £17 fare was located and I was given a form

## What's wrong with the railways (continued)

**BOOKED** a ticket by telephone on December 22 to travel between London and Preston on January 18 (Rail companies' charging too much for tickets, January 3). At the time, my £40 train was deemed to be in the later cheap-rate period and I was told that my credit card would be debited with £38. Now I find that BR wants £36, having moved the cut-off time back to 8.30.

Andrew Radford,  
3 Kerbridge Close,  
Cambridge CB1 2QW.

**ASKED** for a train to get me from Ely to Manchester by 11am. I was told by the National Rail Enquiry Service to go via Leeds with changes at Peterborough and Leeds. Only when I asked

## Power at a shocking price

**GREGORY** Palast (City pages, January 18) may be correct that secrecy, inadequate staffing and a tolerance for exorbitant rates of profit make British utility regulation feeble compared to that in America. He neglects to mention, however, an important feature of the American public-utility system: the spectre of local socialism. Some 13 per cent of US residential electricity customers receive their power from suppliers owned by local government agencies. A small proportion, perhaps, but an American citizen can purchase his electrical distribution system.

Since the public systems deliver power at a slightly lower cost (in part because of preferential tax treatment, and in part because there are no shareholders to pay dividends to), the voters can find this tempting. Professor Alfred Kahn, probably the leading American expert on regulation, believes that the example of existing publicly owned utilities, together with the threat of local public take-over, has done much more

than regulation to reduce electricity prices. Which raises a question about the advisability of regulated private monopolies in a state as centralised as Britain. Would the Government be willing to let the voters of Bradford, or Greater London, purchase their local electrical distribution systems for the fair value of the assets?

Frederick Guy,  
ESRC Centre for Business Research,  
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University of Cambridge,  
Cambridge CB3 9DE UK.

**THE** exchange of views on regulation between Gregory Palast and Stephen Littlechild made several references to the price of electricity which need elaborating. With over 50 regulatory bodies across the UK, national comparisons with the UK are unhelpful, whereas a direct price comparison between New York and London customers is more revealing. A typical London household pays 8p for a kilowatt-hour of electricity while the New Yorker pays nearly 17p. No doubt the extra

8p goes towards the fees and salaries of the legions of accountants and lawyers who live off the back of the US regulatory system.

Philip Daubney,  
Electricity Association,  
30 Millbank,  
London SW1P 4RD.

**SO** the Regional Electricity Companies are giving a one-off discount of 25p to all domestic electricity customers. Those of you who pay your accounts by quarterly bill will receive this windfall in the form of a cheque; but the rest of us, who obtain our electricity via pre-paid meters, are being sent, by recorded delivery, electricity tokens to the value of 25p. This not only implies that we cannot be trusted with cash, but ensures that every penny of this largesse, which was supplied in the first place, is returned intact to the RECs — reinforcing the idea that if one is poor, one deserves to be treated shabbily.

Billie Campbell,  
1A Ashfield Avenue,  
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Birmingham B14 7AT.

## Major and other hypocrites

**SO JOHN MAJOR** is getting tough on hypocrisy, is he (Simon Hoggart Sketch, January 24)? What will he do about the people in his party who persistently blab about "the threat to national sovereignty" posed by the EU or a Scottish parliament, but who don't give a damn about other threats?

Foreigners are taking over the Royal Train and the Royal Mail. They are buying into our rail network, our water and electricity supplies, even our National Lottery. They control large chunks of British industry. Don't they pose a threat to national sovereignty? An extra-terrestrial force is gobbling up the coverage of sport on TV. Rumour has it that Murdoch is actually a human being — Australian by birth, American by citizenship. Either way, doesn't his grip on the British media threaten our sovereignty? And what about Conservative Party finances, boosted by donations of tycoons from Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Hong Kong? Will the party's willingness to accept these donations have no effect on national sovereignty? Major's trouble is that he spots hypocrisy only when it is displayed on the Opposition benches; he is oblivious to displays on his own side. Can you get more hypocritical than that?

Eric Alexander,  
8a Chestnut Avenue,  
High Wycombe,  
Bucks HP11 1DJ.

## Be prepared

**YOUR** leader (January 24) makes flattering reference to my Llandudno speech 15 years ago, and seeks to contrast Mr Ashdown's speech as: "Do not prepare for government, but for a share in government." There is in fact no such contrast. My sentence, "Go back to your constituencies and prepare for government," has been so often wrenched out of context as to suggest that I envisaged an overall Liberal majority. Of course, I did nothing of the kind. This was simply a rhetorical flourish at the end of a speech arguing that we should be *zero* of the government. It would scarcely have sounded an effective rallying call to say: "Go back to your constituencies and prepare for a share in government," but no one present could doubt that that was what was meant.

Paddy Ashdown's elaboration on the same theme is all the more cogent, as you recognised, after 16 1/2 years of Tory government. It is not as you described, "a scaled-down vision".

House of Commons,  
London SW1A 0AA.

**CONGRATULATE** Nigel Gann (Letters, January 24) on the diligence of his research. These were the facts of the matter: when our fourth child was allocated to Illington Green School, we sought a place for him at Woodberry Down, another comprehensive, where his brother, sister and foster brother were already pupils. (Prof) David Donnison, 23 Bank Street, Glasgow G12 8JQ.

**WRONG** again. My son's school, Liverpool Blue Coat, is not a grant-maintained school (Six of the best who embarked on Labour, January 23). Quite the reverse. When there was an attempt to take the school into the GM sector I was prominently involved in the campaign which kept the school as a local authority comprehensive.

Peter Kilfoyle MP,  
House of Commons,  
London SW1A 0AA.

More Harriet Harman letters on Page 10

## A Country Diary

**TARBETNESS:** The drive up the east coast was memorable for the amount of wildlife seen, beginning with the so-called haul out of common seals in the Cromarty Firth. The expression implies that the seals drag themselves up on to mud and sand banks and, while they are capable of doing this, the end result is more simple. They simply sit on a bank at the shallowest part as the tide is ebbing and by the time the tide is at its lowest the seals can be many yards away from water. Birds of prey on the trip included a pair of red kites looking very interested in a cove, a sparrow hawk chasing small birds and a buzzard being mobbed by two hooded crows. Near the delightfully named Arabella a herd of whooper swans were grazing but they were very nervous, as if they had been moved on by people more interested in their farm crops. There were 60 adults and only seven juveniles so it looked as though last year's breeding season in Iceland had not gone well. AT

Rockfield there were five male and one female goldeneye and a single guillemot reminded me that dead aunts, including little aunts, have been washed up along this coast in the previous week or so. Tarbetness produced its usual flock of eiders plus a single male long-tailed and a slim looking red-throated diver in winter plumage. The nearby village of Fortmahock had, more recently, two icehouses but the one I had often photographed in the past had unfortunately been destroyed for reasons of safety. I had never seen the other — listed — icehouse but enquiries at the post office soon revealed the structure although, as the villager said: "It is not much to photograph." It was told that there was a hole in the top where they used to drop in the ice but I took their word for this interesting fact. I wonder why such a small village would have two icehouses only about two hundred yards from each other?

RAY COLLIER

سكنا من الامم



Diary Matthew Norman

THE career of my old friend Mad Frankie Fraser blossoms. When last we met him, in December, he was about to star in the Chas & Dave Christmas show in Leeds...

Spare us the sanctimony on the road to Bromley

Commentary Hugo Young

HARRIET Harman is perhaps fortunate that her son, Joe, isn't one year younger. If he was 11 next year not this, she might be making her family decision about his schooling in a context that exposed her ambivalence more starkly...

in a government elected by a large majority to change the world. This, to put it no higher, would alter the politics of her situation. And it's the scenario to be considered. Now, she can just about shelter behind the years of Tory failure...

of State. Southwark schools remain sufficiently bad to drive any enterprising parent to seek an alternative. If Labour had come to power, this situation wouldn't have changed. It will not change for many years...

would be no talk-out other than the base assertion that until the education system was perfectly and completely reformed, prating about a belief in reform imposed no obligations. That might be good enough for the private citizen...

Street, when all else had failed, wouldn't necessarily discredit a Labour politician whose stock in trade was the passionate defence of the NHS. And adultery, the most familiar outpost of public-private conflict, is an entirely discretionary political crime...

NOW some lessons in the categorical denial. Gerald Hinks, Gillingham council's press officer, has written to deny rumours that Gillingham Council uses closed-circuit television cameras in public conveniences...

THE vigil for my unrepentant friend Dr Julian Lewis, the fearless searcher of the airwaves for anti-Tory bias, reaches day seven, and my fears grow by the hour. It is a week since I left my first telephone message inviting him to discuss the new suit brought against him by Scallywag solicitor David Price...

N EATLY twisting the old newspaper saw about what makes news, a dog has shot a man in Kentucky. While Philip Smith of Martin County was hunting, his spaniel Rusty stepped on the trigger of a shotgun...

FROM Bergen in Norway comes news that Dr Ingvald Wilhelmson is having remarkable success treating hypochondriacs. Rather than show them disdain in the orthodox, text-book manner, Dr Wilhelmson is all sympathy and reassurance...

THE brochure for the forthcoming series of lectures at the ICA in London has arrived. Charles Ruthven's 'Imagining Atlantis' sounds intriguing, and so does Stuart Morgan's 'Oblivion or Bolivian: what is wrong with Bolivian art?'

The millennium offers a prospect of national renewal but, argues The Prince of Wales, plans to mark the event are depressingly materialistic. Where are the beacons of hope, the sense of the spirit, the celebration of community?

Make it a matter of the spirit

THE YEAR 2000 will be here before we know it. In the Western world, at least, mankind approaches this watershed with varied emotions. For the dawn of a new millennium is more than a simple change of chronology, or an altered digit on the date line...



The importance of this opportunity becomes clear once we appreciate what the millennium means. Surprisingly, there has been little obvious attempt to look beneath the surface of this event as it applies to us in the waning third millennium...

A thousand ages in thy sight Are like an evening gone. Short as the watch that ends the night Before the rising sun. This concept of renewal is not the monopoly of Christianity but is central to many of the great faiths. Socrates taught that the soul reincarnates every 1,000 years...

ouncements on the subject by the Pope, the rather limited public discussion in Britain about the millennium has not focused on its spiritual importance and the potential it holds for personal and national renewal.

I T IS, to say the least, depressing that there is so little one could describe as transcending the merely material in the projects which have so far been submitted to the Millennium Commission. The closest are the suggestions that church towers should be floodlit, and that a sequence of new crosses should be erected in Shafesbury in the spirit of the Celtic crosses that once bore witness to the early days of Christianity...

throughout the nation as a whole. But it cannot do so until we recognise the need to renew the way in which we educate people, so that we do not educate out those intuitive powers of the heart which lie at the root of all spiritual experience.

We need to start by appreciating the unique heritage of our own country. A society which sets its face against its past and only values what is new and exciting will never be a society which is at peace with itself or which understands itself. The past represents our memory as a society of who we are, whence we came, and the priceless traditions and knowledge which have accumulated over the centuries...

jects which are not linked to these wider issues of real benefit. For there is so much to put right. There is an urgent need to learn how we can discover new and imaginative uses for fine old buildings, rather than knock them down, and to understand and preserve the best of our inheritance, rather than destroy it by ignorance or neglect.

At a time when there are well over 800,000 empty homes in Britain, most — but not all — in private hands, we should look harder at ways to re-use our existing housing before we rush into building on greenfield sites. We should be looking to use the millennium to bring new life to the decaying and derelict centres of some of our great cities where the need to rebuild the fabric of the local community is of supreme importance if a balanced and fulfilling city life is to be restored.

restore specially worthwhile buildings — not just because they are 'old buildings', but because they are irreplaceably imbued with those deeper values which strike a particular chord in our hearts.

In more general terms, can we not use the millennium to bring about the renewal of those building and craft skills which have played such a critical role in shaping the environment we have inherited, and shall pass on to our children? There is still a huge task before us to restore the ravages of that period in the 1960s and 1970s which represented a strange aberration in men's souls...

I hope that help and encouragement will be given to individuals and organisations dedicated to working for those who fall outside the mainstream of society. For help to the disadvantaged, whether in education, housing, or the provision of community facilities, will be an important means of repairing some of the ravages of our 20th-century social history. If nothing else, this would be a tremendous encouragement to the work many people have been doing over the years to try to rebuild the lives of disadvantaged young people in our great cities. We need to attract people to live again in the hearts of both our cities and, increasingly, many of our towns. The imaginative use of millennium funds, through projects to restore some of the building blocks of civilised life — such as more sympathetic housing schemes, or grants to local voluntary groups who can help regenerate communities — can make people's lives better in a way which will have real meaning for them.

All too often, they sit cheek-by-jowl with inner-city deprivation and office wastelands. They could become true centres of renewal stretching far beyond the immediate close. There are already wonderful examples of what can be done in some of our abandoned churches with the creation of health and healing centres which link together body and spirit in a complementary approach to healing. Nor should we forget our villages, where the need to preserve the fundamentals of village life is just as important. It is heartening to know that village halls are already the subject of a number of applications to the Millennium Commission. I hope very much that imaginative and sensitive design will be encouraged in these smaller projects. And I should like to see money going to help

can benefit. The forces it represents bind us all together. As far as Britain is concerned every time, whatever their culture or beliefs and whether the spiritual basis to their lives matters to them or not, can have a stake in the process which the millennium represents. I would hope, for example, that a start might be made to help those faiths, which have been eradicated, but struggling to create places of worship, to erect buildings of real quality. This is, surely, one of those instances where millennium money may be able to build bridges across some of these divisions in Britain's society. The millennium is, therefore, both a celebration and a challenge.

Few people expect, unlike 1,000 years ago, that the year 2000 will usher in a new and just world ruled by wise politicians, and from which violence and turbulence will have been eradicated, but there is, I believe, a resurgence of spirituality across the world; small beacons of civilising values in the face of the all-pervading materialism of recent times, which represent a yearning to improve the dear quality of our lives and to restore those enduring cultural priorities which represent a moral foundation in a world dominated by consumerism. If the millennium can be used to respond to those feelings and emotions it will fulfil a destiny which will last well beyond the year 2000, and add immeasurably to the quality of all our lives.

This article also appears in the February/March edition of Perspectives On Architecture

Prospect

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- John McVicar on morphine: are the dying suffering because doctors won't prescribe? Paul Hirst debunking globalisation: the evidence contradicts the orthodoxy John Maddox on cosmology: why Big Bang theory is compromised by 16 billion year old stars Graham Allison on nuclear terrorism: the world's most urgent problem: leakage of nuclear material from the former USSR Allan Massie on British writers: 1950s writers represented something real in British life, 1960s writers are brilliant but disconnected PLUS Jonathan Miller interviewed on New Labour, French philosophers and TV, Ian Gilmour on the failure of the Tory left, David Hannay on the UN's mission impossible, Kit McMahon on the end of inflation, Lesley Chamberlain on the Russian novel, Regis Debray remembers his friend Mitterrand, Deyan Sudjic on Las Vegas, Jeremy Clarke on Glasgow, Michael Pye on New York

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OUR POSTBAG has overflowed with your views on Harriet Harman's dilemma. Hundreds of letters have been arriving, by post, fax and e-mail — making this the biggest issue on readers' minds for months. What has emerged so far is that you cannot agree on whether she was right in her

decision: a small majority voiced firm support for a parent putting her child's interests first but many came out firmly against what some called "hypocrisy" and a "betrayal" of party policy. Should Harriet Harman resign? There is a wide range of opinion here — though a fair

number of letter writers say her decision makes her a liability for her party. Clearer, however, is your broad view that the education system should not make parents face such choices: far better, you say, that attention is paid to improving the schools themselves.

# Should she stay or should she go?

**L**IVE a few hundred yards from Harriet Harman and must point out that her choice of schools is wider than indicated in your newspaper. All my children have attended a good comprehensive in Plumlico which is much nearer than St Olive's and easy to get to by public transport. For what it's worth, 54 per cent of students achieved Grades A-C against the national figure of 52.7 per cent. Jack Straw sends his son to the school and I am sure would recommend it. It is convenient to Westminster and Transport House for parents' evenings. Some inner London schools do achieve a lot and need the support of parents such as Harriet Harman: if they are to continue doing so.

Perhaps I have misunderstood and she is personally content with selection. In which case should she not say so and resign as a shadow minister? David Wilson. 54 Hollingsbourne Road, London SE24 9ND.

**W**E WANT to come clean — as irresponsible parents — we are victimising our children. We could have done otherwise but we are sending them to non-selective, state schools. There, we've confessed. We're socialists, obviously of the more rabid variety, who believe we should live by our principles. We don't use private hospitals, dentists or schools, because they are socially divisive: we think they're positively harmful to citizens, so we imagined they'd be harmful to our kids. We thought we were doing our best for them. Seems not. Now it's official: the Labour Party has decreed that to send your child to a non-selective state school is to victimise that child. Are there, we must ask, enough social workers left to cope with the terrible things so many of us are imposing on our children? Buzz and Polly Rodwell, 10 Berners Street, Ipswich IP1 3LU.

**H**ARRIET HARMAN and Jack Dromey add insult to injury. Not content with putting personal and family preference before national interests, and further damaging Labour's already shabby record on equality of opportunity in education, they now play the "mum's card."

What sort of nonsense is this? Entry into political life means being seen to act honourably in putting public need before private preference. To appeal to the interests of middle-class motherhood is utterly base; it suggests that mothers have a monopoly of morality and panders to archaic and damaging essentialist notions of the feminine. And not only does it deeply offend those of us who sent our children to comprehensive schools in the knowledge that in so doing those schools would improve, but does everyone a disservice in endorsing a "buy your way out" mentality. Harriet Harman should have the courage of her convictions and resign. Prof Marcia Pointon, 21 Clifton Hill, Brighton BN1 3HQ.

**T**HE DEBATE surrounding grammar schools should be clear cut: either selection is morally and socially indefensible or it is not. There is no room for hypocrisy. If Harriet Harman believed selection to be wrong she would not have chosen St Olive's for her son. Failures by Tony Blair and the Shadow Cabinet to condemn Harman's action is a betrayal of the vision and hope which has sustained many Labour supporters through the past 16 years. If New Labour persists in replacing commitment by expediency and if they do not rethink carefully what they do and say concerning education then we will see the birth of a new class of voiceless people: committed supporters who will not support a Labour government. Jane Brown, 54 Sunnyside Avenue, Chelmsford CM1 4JP.

**N**O AMOUNT of rationalisation will rescue Harriet Harman from the charge of hypocrisy. If she thinks the local state schools are not good enough for her children, then they are not good enough for anyone's children. If bad state schools are to improve, they will only do so if influential people send their own children to them. Expedient double-speak is what we have come to expect from the Tory Party in both health and education — it's good enough for you and yours but not for me and mine. If Harriet Harman thinks otherwise, she should resign

not just her shadow post but from the so-called New Labour. John Amos, 1 Kingsland Cottages, Sayers Common, W Sussex BN6 9JG. **T**HERE must be many like me who are profoundly grateful to Harriet Harman; she has made our minds up for us at last. Since she won't resign (and Blair can hardly sack her for following his example, can he?), I know now where they, and I, stand. They stand cowering. I stand gone. I shall not vote Labour again. "Nous sommes avec toi, Arthur!" Steve Hillingworth, 13 Gillstone Drive, Haworth, W Yorks. **W**HAT used to separate the Labour Party from the Conservative Party was that in the Labour movement we did our best for all children. Of course Harriet Harman won't resign. If she were a person to resign on principle she would never have chosen the selfish option in the first place. But she is a potential cabinet minister and a member of the ruling class and, of course, because of this, she believes that there should be one form of education for the children of well-informed and prudent parents, important people like her, and another for the children of the feckless and ignorant. Have the principled socialists in the Labour Party all been castrated? Are you going to tolerate yet another betrayal? She won't resign so you must get rid of her. J G Ollason, Nether Ardgrain, Ellon, Aberdeenshire AB41 6RA. **M**S HARMAN'S argument that in sending her son to a selective school she is merely "making a choice in the context of the system as it is" is disingenuous. It is St Olive's which chooses to be selective: it is not the system which forces it to be so. In making that choice, the school itself endorses the principle which Ms Harman purports to oppose, in choosing to send her child there, she herself endorses the school's policy and the principle. If what is best does not accord with one's political beliefs, why hold those beliefs? Michael Lobban, 8 Mayorswell Street, Durham.



The new intake... a pregnant Harriet Harman arrives at Westminster in 1982. Now one of her children is at the centre of a political storm. Top: children in a North-east comprehensive ponder their future. FRANK MARTINDALE/MPHOTOS

Tory MPs, whose record of sleaze is so long, the opportunity to sneer and cry "humbug". Harman should have resigned. No amount of self-justification can excuse her contemptuous attitude towards supporters who expect better. David Smith, 10 Allington Garden, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 9DP. **H**ARRIET HARMAN'S defence seems to be that she is perfectly justified in taking advantage of the shambles the Tories have created. This raises some intriguing possibilities: John Prescott buying shares in Railtrack; Robin Cook joining the board of Anglian Water; Clare Short set-

ing as political adviser to Cedric Brown. Ludicrous! I used to think so. Simon J. Wallace, 16 Larkwood Close, Kettering, Northants NN16 9NQ. **S**Ocialists have to make painful sacrifices in order to uphold their political reputations. If a principle is to be upheld for the community as a whole, then it has to be applied at individual and family level. Harman junior has to do his bit for the good of the cause, or has the spirit of the Grunwick picket line finally been laid to rest? T. Wild, 18 Easton Grove, Fulwell, Sunderland SR5 1QE.

## Social justice and personal sacrifice

**T**HOSE who are critical of Harriet Harman for sending her son to St Olive's rather than a local comprehensive school are ignoring a fundamental principle of moral decision making. Every individual has an intrinsic value and ought never to be exploited as a means to an end. This is surely one of the underlying ethical foundations of the Labour Party in its pursuit of equality and social justice irrespective of creed, race or status. Sixteen years of Tory government have opposed these foundations by creating an unequal and unjust society in which people are only valued for wealth, status and enterprise. All moral decisions have to be taken within the real world and Harriet Harman chooses what she and her husband believe to be best for their son. It is not illogical or contradictory to strive to change inequality while still making moral choices within the restrictions imposed by others. If Harriet Harman had chosen what she believes to be less than the best for her own son, either to retain her status within the Shadow Cabinet or to uphold a general principle, this would have been an immoral decision and one that betrays the Labour movement. D W Cooling, All Saints Rectory, Church Hill, Furlough CM3 6QH.

**I**CAN think of no better way of highlighting the continuing problems of the state schooling system in this country than for a senior Shadow Cabinet member of a party committed to non-selective education to have to make such a difficult personal decision. I can also think of no better demonstration of personal hypocrisy than for parents to sacrifice the educational opportunities of their child simply because it is politically expedient to do so. If MPs feel they must send their children to the most politically convenient schools, for fear of retribution from the opposition, what hope is there for intelligent debate on the subject? Mathias Disney, 42 Chesham Road, London SW4 6NP.

**A**S A CHILD I attended St Olive's and St Saviour's Grammar School. Later I taught at Kingsdale Comprehensive School, and I am now a parent choosing a secondary school for my eldest son. Ms Harman hopes soon to be in the position to assist Kingsdale to be as well appointed as St Olive's but Kingsdale is working under Conservative education policies which have favoured the rich of affluent Kent to the detriment of the poor of Brixton and Southwark. Although I am an implacable opponent of selective entry to schools, given a choice for my son between Kingsdale and St Olive's I am afraid there is no doubt which I would choose. When Harriet Harman is in the Cabinet I expect to see her working strenuously to remove the divide which makes schools like St Olive's so much more attractive than almost any inner-city secondary school. Until then I respect her right to do the best she can for her children. Teewyn Cockett, 62 High Road, Wortwell IP20 0EN.

**W**HEN it comes to hypocrisy over education, what about a party whose members administer the state education system but largely send their own children to privately-financed schools, whose members run the NHS but largely use private medical care and who apparently make minimal use of state-funded forms of transport? Maurice Cornish, 10 Blackhill Drive, Helensburgh G84 9RE.

**U**Ntil recently I lived yards from Harriet Harman's home and my son attended the same junior school as her son. I would have faced the same dilemma had my husband's job not moved us away. There are no truly comprehensive schools in that part of Southwark. The presence of three major public schools within half a mile means that local state schools neither attract the full range of academic ability or achieve anything like a social mix — they are "comprehensive" only in name. Sixteen years of Tory rule and starvation of the state education system mean they are run down and teacher morale is rock-bottom. Like Ms Harman, I could not have sacrificed my son's future to my principles when the "choices" are illusory. Rachel M Swoffarth, 12 The Meads, Berkhamstead HP4 9QX.

## The marks of inequality in a vicious circle of results

**T**HE DECISION by Ms Harman highlights an issue you overlooked in your Leader (Harriet's Right to Choose, January 22). You quote the comparative poor examination results of schools in her locality. Why not quote the percentage of parents patronising these schools who are architects, accountants in the City, managing directors of merchant banks or others with well above average incomes and success in formal education? Or alternatively the percentages who are unemployed, in low paid and temporary jobs? The publication of examination league tables has demonstrated one more that academic results are closely correlated with the income and occupation of the parents of pupils. The quality of teaching does make a difference but nothing like the dif-

ference it is possible to achieve in academic results between those schools working in affluent areas compared to those in areas of social deprivation. One doesn't have to be a sociologist to recognise the wide disparities of wealth and income between communities today: disparities made all the wider by policies pursued by recent governments. When people like Ms Harman, with all the advantages of high income, cultural capital and influence, send their children outside their local community for schooling this only serves to distort still further the social composition of the schools, depriving inner-city schools of the support of that small number of middle-class parents in their area whilst adding even more of such parents to the schools already achieving good ex-

amination results. Then the Guardian points to inner-city school exam results as some kind of justification for the affluent to avoid local schools. The long-term question is how do we break the vicious circle of school results linked so closely to parental income and the affluence of the area in which a school is located? It may well be that the only hope in the long run is to begin outside the schools by narrowing the wide disparities in income and wealth which have intensified since the 1980s so that so many of the other inequalities which flow from this fact in terms of housing, employment, access to good education and a good quality of life, are significantly reduced. Is there any political will to suggest a policy which might work towards such an end or is organised selfishness now

so firmly entrenched in our psyche that suggesting any other alternative is deemed to be a vote loser? (Dr) Clive Griggs, Gaudick Road, Eastbourne BN20 7SP. **P**ETER HAIN'S letter (January 23) carries in its tail a sweeping sting: the only option for Labour parents is to support their local comprehensive. Doesn't this confuse the means (comprehensives) and the end (high-quality classless education for all children)? Surely there is scope for some imagination in working out a range of options to provide good education without restriction of access on grounds of ability, income or class? A group of parents in Cambridge started such an experiment five years ago. We wanted a school that would

carry forward the child-centred approach now derogated by Conservative ideologues. We also wanted a closer role in our children's education than any large school could provide. And we wanted to work out a co-operative, collective, community-based way of meeting our children's educational needs. We have therefore run a parent-taught, parent-managed, parent-resourced "school", first in the home of one parent and then (when we became too large and had to register formally) in a building we rent for the purpose. We share the costs and — most importantly — the time needed in teaching, preparing materials, cleaning, doing the accounts. With small classes (the largest has six) and a wide range of interests among parents, we have been able to follow the children's interests

and still deliver the core curriculum to a high standard. The result is a school that excludes nobody and has helped to build a sense of community and mutual support. Children with special needs and very high achievers work happily together. Very few parents are "middle class" but all share responsibility and offer creativity. Is this not worth experimenting with, as a way of achieving the goals we hold dear as Labour members? We cannot let our rejection of the divisive ways of the (selective or private-sector) past and our desire for a fairer, more supportive and more effective education system in the future be fossilised in an exclusive support for just one way of tackling the issue. Barbara Wall, 47 Grove Lane, London SE5 6SP.

**B**ARRASSMENT before friend and foe alike, Miss Harman may emerge as a less astute politician but she is a better human being. H D Edmunds, 10A Risca Road, Newport NP9 4JW.

**W**HEN it comes to hypocrisy over education, what about a party whose members administer the state education system but largely send their own children to privately-financed schools, whose members run the NHS but largely use private medical care and who apparently make minimal use of state-funded forms of transport? Maurice Cornish, 10 Blackhill Drive, Helensburgh G84 9RE.

**U**Ntil recently I lived yards from Harriet Harman's home and my son attended the same junior school as her son. I would have faced the same dilemma had my husband's job not moved us away. There are no truly comprehensive schools in that part of Southwark. The presence of three major public schools within half a mile means that local state schools neither attract the full range of academic ability or achieve anything like a social mix — they are "comprehensive" only in name. Sixteen years of Tory rule and starvation of the state education system mean they are run down and teacher morale is rock-bottom. Like Ms Harman, I could not have sacrificed my son's future to my principles when the "choices" are illusory. Rachel M Swoffarth, 12 The Meads, Berkhamstead HP4 9QX.

**M**Y DAUGHTER passed the 11-plus 21 years ago. We had the choice of two local schools, one a girl's grammar, the other a mixed comprehensive. According to my principles, I opted for the comprehensive. My daughter blames me still for denying her the chance of the best education possible. I still believe in the principles but I also believe of those principles must be firmly there and working before one sacrifices the future of one's child. Eva M Knutson, 16 Highfield Road, Northwood HA6 1ET.

**W**HY all the fuss over Harriet Harman sending her son to a selective school? Do opponents of rail privatisation refuse to travel by train until the railways are re-nationalised? Do opponents of electricity privatisation use candles? Even those who want to change the system must use that system until it is changed. Justin Nelson, Meridian House, St David's Bridge, Cranbrook TN17 3FL.

**A** change for the bitter **H**ARRIET HARMAN should consider crossing the House and becoming a Tory. That way she'd never have any moral principles to defend. Maureen Plantagenet, 22 rue des Moutiers, 31450 Montiscard, France. **S**ENIOR Blairites are apparently unconcerned about the Harman furore because they feel it reinforces the impression that Labour has changed. In the same vein, perhaps one can conclude that the activities of Tory MPs give a more rounded perspective of human frailty and that this can only benefit a party that puts itself in a "Back to Basics" straitjacket. David Sibson, 15 rue St Pierre, 1519 Luxembourg.

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# Finance Guardian

## Watchdogs get more bite

Simon Ebevis and  
Larry Elliott

**T**HE Government is planning to boost the resources of the utility watchdogs as the opening shot in a pre-election campaign to repair the battered image of privatisation.

Government in the final stages of preparing the two big pre-election privatisations. Railtrack and the nuclear power company, British Energy.

With public support for these sell-offs at a low ebb, ministers appear anxious to bang the drum for flagship privatisations such as British Telecom, British Gas and the electricity industry where they say customers reaped real benefits from lower prices and better service.

Faced with Labour taunts that the regulatory framework is too lenient, the Government realises it needs to shore up the system to convince voters of the benefits of privatisation.

Watchdogs could be given funds to hire special advisers to ensure that they are equipped to scrutinise the utilities more effectively. The need for more resources has become more acute since last year's wave of takeovers in

the electricity and water industries and the emergence of super-utilities spanning two or more sectors.

Another proposal being considered is the creation of an all-party parliamentary select committee to oversee utility regulation.

Ministers see some case for amalgamating regulators — particularly the gas and electricity watchdogs, Ofgas and Ofwat — provided that the utilities are forced to keep separate parts of their business transparent.

They have ruled out bringing the watchdogs under one roof for fear that the utilities would find it easier to blur their financial performances and escape tough scrutiny.

### British Gas grooms Cedric's successor

**BRITISH GAS** acted yesterday to strengthen its board by appointing a new finance director, leading to fresh speculation that the company was grooming a successor to chief executive Cedric Brown, Chris Barrie writes.

Philip Hampton, finance director of British Steel, will join the group on a salary of £295,000. He will also get £70,000 compensation for loss of share options at BS.

The appointment leaves the current finance director, Roy Gardner, free to concentrate on the key responsibilities — assumed by him late last year — of renegotiating BG's costly "take or pay" contracts and preparing the group for competition in the domestic market.

Analysis suggested that the move made it more likely that Mr Gardner would succeed Mr Brown, should he decide to step down. The company dismissed the suggestion last night as "speculation".

John Whybrew, a former adviser to Lady Thatcher, will join the board from April as director for strategic planning and corporate affairs.

## CBI to reverse pay strategy in 'real' rises call

Larry Elliott  
Economics Editor

**G**OVERNMENT hopes of a pre-election return to the "feelgood factor" will be given a huge boost today when the CBI calls for workers to be given higher wages and a bigger share of national income.

that has bedevilled Britain for the past 25 years has now been decisively broken.

The CBI no longer believes that there is a prospect of big pay rises pushing up prices, which in turn lead to even higher wage demand, he will say.

Although the CBI admits it has been "banging the table" about the need for wage restraint in recent years, it believes there is a need for a change in real terms over the coming years.

High unemployment and endemic job insecurity meant that the expected wage explosion after the Black Wednesday devaluation of sterling failed to materialise.

Earnings, which never grew at an annual rate of less than 7 per cent in the 1980s have been stuck at 3.25 per cent for several months.

Meanwhile, a cheaper pound, lower interest rates and modest pay demands meant that corporate profitability was restored.

Mr Turner is expected to say that while his remarks should not be interpreted as an excuse for "lottery fever" among wage bargainers, there is scope for growth in real wages without any impact on Britain's prosperity.

However, he added that provided pay demands remained modest it should be possible for workers to receive real increases in pay without inflation taking off.

## Short Brothers says 1,500 jobs may have to go

Belfast company takes insurance against Fokker crisis, writes Mark Milner

**B**ELFAST-BASED Short Brothers yesterday issued a formal warning that up to 1,500 jobs may have to go in the fall-out from the crisis at the Dutch aircraft manufacturer, Fokker, one of its biggest customers.

Fokker, effectively cutting off its cash life-line, followed the collapse of talks between Daimler-Benz and the Dutch government, which also holds a Fokker stake, on a possible rescue package.

On Tuesday night, Fokker said it had successfully sought court protection from its creditors for much of the group, allowing it a breathing space of up to a month during which it would be seeking a rescuer.

Short, part of the Canadian group Bombardier, has been seen, despite denials, as a possible bidder for at least part of Fokker. It supplies wings for Fokker 70 and Fokker 100 jetliners.

The Belfast-based group has held talks with Fokker and said that "subject to confirmation that our exposure will be covered, we will continue wing production for the present, albeit on a slightly reduced schedule, pending further discussions with Fokker."

Trading in Fokker shares resumed on the Amsterdam stock exchange yesterday. The shares initially tumbled from 2.3 guilders to 1.75 guilders but later rebounded to 3.25 guilders in heavy trading.

## Nottingham dons to deny Chancellor honorary third degree

Richard Thomas

**K**ENNETH Clarke was never, to Margaret Thatcher's mind, "one of us" and during her reign the two shared the same combative personalities.

But today the Chancellor is set to suffer the same fate as the former prime minister, and see his nomination for an honorary degree rebuffed.

Eleven years after Oxford dons blocked Mrs Thatcher's candidacy for an honorary doctorate, staff at Nottingham Trent University — a stone's throw from Mr Clarke's Rushcliffe constituency — are rebelling against a proposal to make him a Doctor of Law.

As one lecturer put it: "If Oxford can do it to Thatcher, we can certainly do it to Clarke."

Staff are particularly incensed at the citation accompanying the award — which has been suggested by the university's vice-chancellor, Professor Ray Cowell — commending the Chancellor for "services to education".

One member of the university's academic board said that, given government cuts in higher education spending and the enormous pressure on teaching staff, the suggestion to honour the former education secretary in this way was "extraordinary" and outrageous.

And further salt was rubbed into Mr Clarke's wounds when the Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George — who has been opposing the Chancellor's monetary policy for most of the last year — received, with no fanfare, an honorary degree from London Guildhall University.



Gown in town... The Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, collecting his honorary degree from the Guildhall University, London. PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

## JobCentre pay system 'crackers'

Martyn Halsall and Seamus Milne

**T**HE pay system in the Employment Service, currently facing the prospect of an escalation of industrial action by low-paid JobCentre staff, is "crackers", according to a confidential internal report, which has been passed to the Guardian.

At issue are job cuts, casualisation attacks by claimants and the extra workload created by the introduction of the new Jobseekers' Allowance — as well as the arbitrary implementation of a below-inflation wage settlement. Last night the CPSA leader,

Ms Le Sage warned that the ES pay system was too complicated, "individualised" and "hybrid" for "individuals, their line managers or pay sections to understand". There was a common perception, she said, that the ES had not honoured its pay agreements.

Personnel staff within the ES were facing "a deluge of inquiries" with inadequate reference material, insufficient time and over-complicated forms.

An ES spokesperson said last night Ms Le Sage had identified concerns which were well known within the service and which would be addressed once the dispute was over.

## Notebook

### Battening down unruly markets



Edited by Alex Brummer

**T**HE extraordinary rise in the shares of Standard Chartered bank, which shot up to a new all-time high in after-hours trading last night, has provoked enormous speculation.

Indications that ministers are giving serious thought to strengthening the regulatory system is encouraging, even if it is no more than a sensible piece of politics. It is at least a recognition of public uneasiness.

But it is by no means enough. At the beginning of Margaret Thatcher's radical experiment with privatisation, consumers were promised that they would be given new power and a voice.

Certainly Standard Chartered, with its strong presence in emerging markets in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, would provide an Asian leg for any international bank looking for a more global reach.

Surrounding the watchdogs with a few more advisers may be wise but it won't win the public back.

However, credible speculation may seem to be a bubble in Standard Chartered's share price appears to be one of those inexplicable events which plague certain companies at a time of bull markets.

Standard Chartered is simply the latest in a series of substantial public companies — the last two being Royal Bank of Scotland (before Christmas) and Zeneca (for much of last year) — to be defined by the market as bid candidates.

That, of course, does not mean that there will not be a bid in the near future. However, the general rule is that when a share moves as speedily as Standard's last night a statement of some kind to the Stock Exchange would be required to prevent unruly markets.

It is the exchange's duty to do more to ensure that such share bubbles are fully investigated and that if there is any evidence of merger/bid activity it should not be allowed to fester.

It HAS clearly dawned on the Government that if it wants to go into the next general election with any hope of proclaiming the benefits of privatisation it must do something about regulation.

Its job will be tough. Public cynicism about the privatised utilities is at an all-time high. This follows a series of top pay scandals, shareholder windfalls, questionable judgments from the regulators,

That said, this whole episode does nothing to enhance the reputation of Britain's financial community. Shareholders may currently be collecting the proceeds by selling their stock in the marketplace, but they might also question the waste of some £15 million in advisers' fees (between both sides) which were involved in this hostile takeover.

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It is the exchange's duty to do more to ensure that such share bubbles are fully investigated and that if there is any evidence of merger/bid activity it should not be allowed to fester.

However, would not MAM as the biggest shareholder in both companies have been better advised to have used its clout to foster an agreed deal under which the Forte family bought out the upmarket hotels and Granada took over its control the restaurants and other hotel brands which are more in keeping with its branding experience?

UTILITY REFORMS

Charles Deacon, 52, a solicitor, of Newcastle under Lyme, Staffs, and James Fuller, 56, a salesman, of Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, now face up to 14 years in jail.

All that MAM and company have succeeded in doing is reinforcing the image of the City as a place obsessed with short-term dealing profits, rather than making sensible judgments in the longer term interests of British business.

## Pair found guilty of £2m Belling pension fund sting

**T**WO men who conned the cooker maker Belling into raising its pension fund were yesterday found guilty of a series of frauds on leading European companies totalling £3 million.

Charles Deacon, 52, a solicitor, of Newcastle under Lyme, Staffs, and James Fuller, 56, a salesman, of Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, now face up to 14 years in jail.

A jury at central London's Middlesex Crown Court found both Deacon and Fuller guilty of six counts of conspiracy to defraud. Deacon was convicted on two counts of obtaining property by deception. Fuller was also found guilty of deception. Sentence will be passed today.

Belling was among the pair's first victims. In May 1991, the Enfield-based company was struggling to survive and its desperate directors could not resist.

The jury failed to reach verdicts on the two outstanding deception charges against Deacon.

During the case, which began last October, the court heard that the defendants had spent many years tricking individuals and companies with tales of international intrigue, the CIA and massive secret funds. To back up their colourful stories, letters were forged from the then-US President George Bush, the American Secret Service and the banks.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SETS

Australia 2.00	France 7.40	Italy 2.380	Singapore 2.11
Austria 15.19	Germany 2.1850	Malta 0.5375	South Africa 5.36
Belgium 44.90	Greece 368.00	Netherlands 2.4500	Spain 182.75
Canada 2.01	Hong Kong 11.50	New Zealand 2.23	Sweden 10.23
Cyprus 0.6560	India 54.11	Norway 9.60	Switzerland 1.74
Denmark 8.44	Ireland 0.9500	Portugal 226.00	Turkey 88.25
Finland 6.73	Israel 4.73	Saudi Arabia 5.80	USA 1.4775

Supplied by Halliwell Bank including Indian rupee and Israeli sheqel.

50 كتاب الادب







14 SPORTS NEWS

Soccer
Coca-Cola Cup, quarter-final replay
Birmingham City 2, Norwich City 1

Daish buzz
supplies
Blues bottle

GOAL a minute from time from Liam Daish put 10-man Birmingham City into the semi-final of the cup at St Andrews last night. The captain rose at a corner and headed the ball past the unbelieving Gunn to set up a tie with Leeds United.

It is never over until the fat man shoots and increasing squalling goal for Norwich 12 minutes from time seemed destined to take the match into extra-time.

The tubby midfielder, on loan from Liverpool, unleashed a 25-yard drive which bent inside the right-hand post leaving the goalkeeper Gremienk no chance.

Barry Fry went into the game demanding more bottle from his players, and he was not talking about increasing the milk order. His team had taken just nine points from 30 in the League and were knocked out of the FA Cup by their local rivals Wolves.

It was the search for bottle which no doubt lay behind Fry's £200,000 bid yesterday for Wimbledon's uncompromising midfielder Vinnie Jones. Birmingham had also revived their interest in Everton's Vinny Sanways, though the Merseyside club rejected a £3 million offer on Monday.



Enjoying the weight... Davies and Whiston refuse to take things too seriously during weight training at Lilleshall. PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL STEELE

FA CUP PROFILE
Liverpool bring gaiety to the Meadow

Robert Pryce finds Fred Davies and his Shrewsbury charges in uncommonly relaxed mood before Saturday's fourth-round tie

INJURIES may have ripped the backbone out of his team for the biggest game in their recent history, but Fred Davies says he has a trick up his sleeve for our lads to play with.

Walton but no Merseyside team showed any interest in him. He was approached as an electronics engineer and did not turn professional until he was 31, when Plymouth Argyle took him on.

Walton but no Merseyside team showed any interest in him. He was approached as an electronics engineer and did not turn professional until he was 31, when Plymouth Argyle took him on.



Whiston... split loyalties

Friendly international
Italy 3, Wales 0

Wales are sunk
in the rain

WALE were put to the sword by Arrigo Sacchi's youthful Italian squad in the rain last night, with only Neville Southall, in the visitors' goal, and some poor finishing preventing a heavier defeat.

He converted a cross from Angelo Di Livio, his left foot shot deflecting off the body of Southall, who was extending his Wales record last night to 85 caps.

Snowline
24hr skiing information
direct from major resorts
0891 333 541
For a faxed report, dial from a phone connected to a fax machine
0891 662 255
Weatherline
0891 333 401
Scottish ski resorts
0891 200 624

Results

Table of sports results including Soccer, Friendly Internationals, Coca-Cola Cup, Premiership League, Scottish League, Basketball, Chess, Figure Skating, Ice Hockey, Snooker, Fixtures, Soccer, Rugby League, Tennis, Badminton, and Swimming.

Basketball

Table of basketball results from various leagues including NBA, British Basketball League, and others.

Chess

Table of chess tournament results including the HOOVER'S TOURNAMENT and other events.

Whelan added
to Republic list

AS HATS continue to be thrown into the Irish ring - but not always by their owners - three officials of the Football Association of Ireland have been added to the list of those who have been recommended for the post of manager of the Republic.

Cricket
Boon announces retirement
as Australia strive for peace

DAVID BOON, the right-handed batsman who has played 106 Tests and made 21 centuries for Australia, begins his last in Adelaide today, the third against Sri Lanka.

Keegan returns
hopeful
of deal

KEVIN KEEGAN returned from Italy to the chill of a North-east winter yesterday confident that Faustino Asprilla will follow him some time next week.

After 48 hours of hard bargaining the Newcastle United manager believes he has done enough - both financially and personally - to convince the Colombian striker that he should swap Parma for St James' Park.

Boxing
Bowe leaves
Lewis back
in the cold

LENNOX LEWIS versus Riddick Bowe, the heavyweight match that has been billed as a "By Public Demand" billing has been shelved.

Agass mirac
THEATRE LONDON
Various advertisements and notices on the right edge of the page.



الرياض 25

Keegan returns hopeful of deal

Tennis

Agassi goes for miracle finish

David Irvine in Melbourne

HANG the start. It's the way you finish a match that matters. That, it seems, is Andre Agassi's philosophy.

Having trailed by a set in three of his previous matches, the unconventional American clawed his way back from a two-set deficit to defeat Jim Courier 6-7, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 here at Flinders Park yesterday and reach the semi-finals of the Australian Open.

"I didn't have too many options. In the men's game today, when you are down two sets and a break it's time either for a miracle or for me to get off the court," said the defending champion. "I went for the miracle."

His triumph not only marked his first victory over Courier in seven attempts since 1990 but also restored him to the No. 1 ranking he had surrendered to Pete Sampras in September.

Boris Becker again profited from the closure of the stadium roof; another storm had struck the city, and Becker served up an indoor 28-ace equivalent as he put the young Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov to the sword 6-4, 7-6, 6-1. "But I think he was caught off guard even more by my strokes from the back," said the German.

Becker, whose most recent of five Grand Slam titles was won here in 1991, now faces the left-hander Mark Woodford, the first Australian to reach the last four since Pat Cash in 1986, after the 30-year-old outmanoeuvred Sweden's Thomas Enqvist, the No. 7 seed, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4.

"I served exceptionally well [16 aces] and that was so important for me," said Woodford. In fact he gave the Swede a lesson in craftsmanship as he made his way into his first big semi-final at the 38th attempt.

Agassi's semi-final opponent will be Michael Chang, whom he has beaten in all three Grand Slam matches in which they have clashed. Though he respects Chang's tennis he is not over-awed by the No. 5 seed's unwillingness to play for the United States in Davis Cup competition and has said so publicly.

After Chang had declined last spring to make himself available for the clay-court with Italy in Palermo, Agassi



Becker... awesome best

commented: "No doubt he was in Asia making another million or two." That might add a touch of needle.

Agassi put his slow start down to a lack of match practice. Since losing in the US Open final, a defeat which cost him the No. 1 ranking, he had played only three competitive matches before arriving in Australia, owing to a persistent chest injury.

Against what looked very much like the old Courier — his backhand was deadly — Agassi was both slow and inaccurate as his opponent increasingly imposed his authority to win the first set, breaking after denying the title holder the lead five points earlier.

The second set was even more emphatic, and when Courier broke to love at the start of the third it looked all over. Only then, when on the break, did Agassi dig in his heels.

Agassi's game grew noticeably more aggressive, the forehand errors that had

punctuated the opening 90 minutes just melted away. Courier, who had called the tune relentlessly, was gradually forced on to the back foot and seemed lost for an answer.

From 3-4 in the fourth set Agassi won seven successive games at a cost of 10 points to go 4-0 ahead in the fifth. "He came on very strongly," said Courier. "I think I maybe let him play better than I should have, but he didn't make many mistakes. He played very well those last three sets and came up with the shots when he needed them. My hat's off to him."

Compared with Chang's 8½-hour straight-sets jaunt — the most impressive run to the semi-finals of any of the survivors — Agassi has endured the equivalent of an assault course. Yet it may have given him exactly the preparation he needed to overcome his opponent brimming with confidence.

He issued a clear warning to Chang. "Today's match was the closest I have been to playing to the level I feel I can play. It's the best tennis I've put together here."

Becker was at his awesome best, giving Kafelnikov — who had boasted that his name would be on the trophy — a lesson in controlled aggression. The German backed his serve with a brilliant volleying display and never once faced a break point in the 112-minute encounter.

"Maybe I was too confident," Kafelnikov conceded. "If they play the last two matches with the roof closed Boris will win it for sure. Today we saw the difference between a good player and a great player."



Glossy finish... Agassi regained the world No. 1 ranking with yesterday's win over Courier PHOTOGRAPH: STEVE HOLLAND

Rugby League

In-out day for Aussies

Paul Fitzpatrick

AS ONE Australian coach arrived yesterday, another was leaving. Shaun McRae was ushered in at St Helens; Gary Grienke parted company with the London Broncos, claiming that he had been sacked.

McRae, who succeeds the dismissed Eric Hughes, made an impressive debut at his press conference at Knowsley Road while Grienke, appointed coach 18 months ago when the Brisbane Broncos took over the London Crusaders, was describing his dismissal as "a bit of a shock".

London chairman Barry Maranta claimed yesterday that the club had failed to reach agreement with Grienke on a new contract. But the coach insisted that he had been sacked.

There could be a curious twist to this tale. The appointment of McRae, following that of John Doray at Warrington this week, left eight of the 11 Centenary Championship clubs under the control of overseas coaches. Grienke's departure reduced the figure to seven, but London, a club owned by Australians and packed with Australian players, may now buck the trend and turn to a British coach.

Hughes and Clive Griffiths, the Welshman overlooked for the Warrington job, both offer excellent credentials, but there is little doubt that the Broncos will consider other candidates as well.

Among them could be Brian Johnson, who spent eight years at Warrington before resigning this month, his fellow Australian Ross Strudwick, who was London's coach from 1989 to 1993, and Tony Gordon, a Kiwi who made way for Grienke in May 1994.

"This is a major decision," said Maranta. "We will not rush into anything." For Sunday's Ulster Challenge Cup tie at Dewbury, a game the Broncos should win comfortably, three players — Terry Matterson, Kevin Langer and the articulate Tony Ras — will be in charge.

Mike Nicholas, team manager of the Welsh side playing in Division Two in the 1996 summer season was "no pipe-dream". Maurice Lindsay, the game's chief executive, confirmed on Tuesday that an application for membership had been received but "Mike might have difficulty getting things in place in the time available".

Nicholas, however, says that he has had discussions with the Welsh Rugby Union about the prospect of a Welsh side playing in Division Two in the 1996 summer season was "no pipe-dream".

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Boxing

Bowe leaves Lewis back in the cold

Tetchy Hingis goes out like a prima donna

David Irvine sees the 15-year-old prodigy self-destruct against Amanda Coetzer

THERE was nothing "awesamd and demure" — as one commentator's description — about Martina Hingis as she failed to reach the semi-finals of the Australian Open singles.

Amanda Coetzer. She repeatedly threw her racket, even after being warned, and it was a decidedly tetchy 15-year-old, every bit the embryo prima donna, who finally bowed to the tiny South African "no-stop challenge".

her peers have no doubts about that. Monica Seles is "amazed" at the youngster's maturity and Coetzer believes that the adult Hingis will be "a strong force in the game".

It was a match Hingis lost rather than Coetzer won. Almost 75 per cent of the winner's points came from her opponent's unforced errors. Hingis could never cope with a nasty swirling wind or her opponent's persistence. In time she will,

players as say Jennifer Capriati. Andrea Jaeger, Tracy Austin or Seles were at the same age.

Hockey Britain tighten draw-string

Pat Rowley in Barcelona

ONCE again Britain led their opponents draw level and even threaten to snatch a winner in the last seconds.

under pressure in the first period. Rob Thompson should have given them the lead before Giles put away their first corner shot 17 minutes.

Spain had the skill up front to trouble the fine British defence but Mason in goal kept them out. He has, however, been error-prone too, and when the right-half Amat broke to the byline, Mason helped the centre into goal.

Britain took only two minutes to regain the lead. Laslett led Rob Thompson and the centre-forward trapped the

ball and shot in a trice. But Britain saw victory thwarted when a deflection put Garcia in possession on the penalty spot; he shot weakly, but not when Mason presented him with a second chance.

Sport in brief

Athletics Sally Gunnell hopes to run the 400 metres at the AAA Indoor Championships at the Birmingham NIA on February 24, which would be her first race in Britain for nearly 18 months after being suspended for 11 months for a doping offence in 1995 and 1996, has died in Budapest aged 65.

and David Sales (60) top-scored for England. Zimbabwe finished the day on 13 for two, 284 behind.

RIHA claimed a "miscalculation" for England. Zimbabwe's disciplinary record had led to reports that the defence team should have been serving a one-game suspension.

Carl Lewis, a 47-year-old financial adviser from Merthyr, beat the home favourite Mike Morgan 7-1, 7-6 in Llanelli yesterday to reach the final of the CIS Insurance Welsh indoor singles championship.

Basil Steer, the former Walker Cup selector, has taken over from Geoff Marks as president of the English Golf Union.

Nottingham Panthers will not lose the point gained in last Sunday's 4-4 draw with Pils, writes Vic Batchelder. The

Entertainment listings for Theatre London, including shows like Fame, The Glass Menagerie, and various musicals.



# SportsGuardian

## England send for Sampson of the sixth form

David Hopps on the schoolboy asked by his country to do extra games

THERE is hardly a schoolboy in the land who would not have deemed it a wind-up if he had strolled out of a classroom to learn that he had been called up by England. But Paul Sampson, dumb-founded as he was, had no doubts. "I had to believe it, the headmaster told me," he said. "The last person you expect to wind you up is a headmaster."

Sampson will not play against Wales in England's next match on Saturday week, barring a spate of accidents among the nation's wings, but his presence in a 30-man training squad started a grey and dormant Yorkshire morning into life.

An 18-year-old sixth-former at Woodhouse Grove, Bradford, Sampson is captain of the school XV. His experience of senior rugby amounts to half a dozen games with League Three Otley, beginning with a pastoral debut against Upper Wharfedale. "Next season I'm looking for first-XV rugby in the First Division," he said. Bath, Wasps and Leicester are jostling for his favours and that could mean the offer of a university scholarship if he passes his A-levels this year.

Sampson comes from po-



Gee whiz... Paul Sampson contemplates his future with Carling and the lads outside Woodhouse Grove school yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL STEELE

tent rugby stock, although until now allegiances have always been with league rather than union. His cousin Dean, the Castleford prop, is an England international; uncle Malcolm played on the wing for Wakefield Trinity in the 1963 cup final; and uncle David is a former Castleford coach.

His father Brian, a league amateur in his playing days, is now a "union convert". Some evenings, even at 62, he prods Paul into a

walk up the road to Thackley Football Club, where he shows him a few swerves and sidesteps. "I never knew he could still run 20 yards until I saw those," said Sampson. "He is still a big influence."

So too is Nigel Melville, his coach at Otley and a former England captain who was also first called up as a teenager. "It will not be an ordeal for him to train alongside the likes of Carling and Gossett," Melville said. "He is a very confident

young man with incredible pace and talent. He scored four tries from full-back against Kendal recently and I believe that is his best position."

His dad still chuckles at the memory. "He forgot his gunshield so I went back into the dressing room to get it," he said. "By the time I got back he'd just run 70 yards for the first try."

When it comes to "fast-tracking" selections, no one is more suited to the description than Sampson. He

has run 100 metres in 10.7sec, which makes him the fastest man in the England squad, and he is the Yorkshire junior men's champion over 100m and 200m. Roger Howard, the school's rugby master, is adamant: "I've never seen a boy so fast on the rugby field. He takes your breath away."

Last Sunday was strenuous even for such a sports-orientated family. After weekend training with England Under-19 near Wolver-

hampton, a rapid drive to Sheffield enabled Sampson to compete in the Northern Counties Sprint Championships, where he won the 80m final in a record 6.94sec.

"I've always cleaned his boots for him," said Brian. "I used to do it to save money; otherwise his boots would have just rotted. Next time I'll do it out of pride. I might even polish the studs."

England squad, page 13

## Mood-swings that torment the pros



Angela Patmore

WHAT makes affable Ernie Els suddenly fling his putter with such force that it cracks in two against his golf bag? What prompts the popular Scot Colin Montgomerie, in the middle of the Johnnie Walker World Championship in idyllic Tryall, to utter the F-word? What causes the Open champion John Daly, playing there in 1991, rabidly to bend his putter out of shape? And what compels four amateurs, mid-swing on the fairways of Camberley Heath, to smash a car windscreen and lambast the driver with their clubs?

Golf. A balmy game to drive you barmy. In 1927, Dr Theo Hyslop, an "alienist" (psychiatrist) working at "Bethlem" hospital in London, noted in his Mental Handicaps In Golf: "The 'insanity of doubt' may in golfers attain to such severity as to warrant the diagnosis of 'cerebral pruritus' or 'mental itch'... The mental stance is affected by pros and cons, until a mental 'wriggle-waggle' manifests itself by physical readjustments or grotesque flourishes."

Dr Hyslop advised golfers to cultivate "automatism" and not ruin performance by too much thinking. Unfortunately, since even a brisk professional golfer takes 16 hours to complete 72 holes, and since he spends a mere 7½ minutes hitting the ball, he has 16 hours 52½ minutes in which to worry.

TO THE amateur, golf is addictive, an adorable religion, even fun. But the professionals, some of whom begin a new Volvo European Tour in Singapore today, see the sport from the inside. They know its hidden depths as a stress experiment, and the spectacle of some of golf's former high-fliers in torment should perhaps arouse our suspicions concerning this "innocent" pastime.

Nick Faldo, struggling on the practice green last October with a plastic bottle stuffed under his arm to steady his elbow; Ben Hogan, "right as a banjo string" in the Fifties, paralysed for so long over his putter that even his caddy couldn't look at him; Bernhard Langer in the Eighties,

reversing his hands on the putter to control his agonising twitches and "yips"; Tony Jacklin, falling from grace in 1974, haunted by nightmares about being trapped in an enormous sink and putting in the plughole.

Golf rattles its finest players. Some say they "can't find enough rest rooms out there" because it affects their digestion. Those heroes of yesterday, Henry Cotton and Bobby Jones, both suffered disabling stomach cramps. Big hitters find putting tense and humiliating because "it ought to be so easy". They step away, suffer spasms and distort themselves into strange shapes. Others endure the long-game misery of "shanking". Others get to the last hole with a big lead and then "take the gas" — become wobbly and incompetent from nerves. Nobody is immune. Even Arnold Palmer once accused himself of fear of winning.

But why should golf unglue a fellow? Ostensibly there is nothing to fear on a golf course. It is just a tract of land with a few humps and hollows, where people can amuse themselves in the fresh air. Why then is it laid out in such a way? Why does the designer lengthen it to counter long hitters, and place obstacles where they will cause split decisions? Why does he devise ways to make the golfer think left when he should be thinking right, back when he should think forward? Why does he build a bunker or hypnotic ponds? In order to mobilise fear.

THE psychiatrist Dr David Morley, author of *Golf and the Mind*, observes that this "game" appears to be a conspiracy to drive players mad: "Hazards on the golf course are a rich source of anxiety and tension. Bunkers precipitate anxiety in all but the most expert golfers, and water, with all its regressive implications, has a strange way of mobilising tension." Bunkers like those called "Hell" are meant to frighten. Bobby Jones said of the Road Hole at St Andrews that it was "one of the most terrifying experiences the game has to offer". Not just a hole; a terrifying experience.

Like the great allegories of literature, the golf course is a journey through a man's own mind, encountering his demons and doubts as he comes to the different parts of the course designed to trigger them off. He must look panic in the eye, and whistle. If he cannot do that, the bunkers will get him, or the slippery greens, or the Road Hole or "the gas" on the 18th.

## Howe backs the Robson cause

David Lacey

BRYAN ROBSON was yesterday nominated by Don Howe, his fellow England coach, as the best man to succeed Terry Venables after the European Championship. Robson may feel he needs more managerial experience, but Howe believes the former

England captain already has the right qualities to take over the squad for the 1998 World Cup qualifiers.

"I think Bryan should get the job," said Howe, who like Robson was recruited for the England coaching staff when Venables succeeded Graham Taylor two years ago. "I've got a feeling the Football Association thinks he should get the job, too."

"It's up to the lad himself. I know Terry has said it should be an older man's job, a job for someone more experienced, but I don't think so. Franz Beckenbauer wasn't that old when he took over the German team, was he?"

The 60-year-old Howe, who won 23 England caps as a right-back in the late Fifties and coached Arsenal in the League and FA Cup double in

1971, is the most experienced member of Venables's back-room staff for Euro '96.

He was Ron Greenwood's England assistant for the 1982 World Cup and Bobby Robson's No. 2 for the World Cups of 1986 and 1992 as well as the 1988 European Championship, standing down when Taylor took over.

A growing number of people, including some within the FA, believe that if the firm of Robson and Howe was good enough to take England to the World Cup semi-finals six years ago, then the partnership of Howe and Robson, young Mr Bryan that is, would be the ideal combination for 1998.

Bryan Robson, who won 90 England caps and was denied at least another 25 by injuries, is 39 and has been manager at Middlesbrough for a season and a half.

He has not ruled himself out as an England candidate for the future but for the moment feels he is still learning the job at club level.

Nevertheless Howe feels Robson would have no problems taking over from Venables in time for the first World Cup qualifier in Moldova on September 1.

"Bryan is a deep thinker and he has the respect of the players," he said at Busham Abbey yesterday as England completed the first of the two three-day training sessions Venables has organised before Bulgaria visit Wembley in March for a warm-up game.

"They love him. They admired him as an international who did ever so well, and now they admire him as a manager. You can't have anything better than that."

"Bryan as an international coach? No problem. And at this level, tactically, you've got to be on the ball all the time. You've got to watch what is going on both in this

country and abroad. You've got to be right up with things."

Should Robson change his mind and get the job, Howe would still be a willing assistant. He wants nothing more than that, however — and he has had a heart bypass operation.

"The position I've got now is good enough for me," Howe insisted yesterday. "I'm happy doing what I'm doing. I love it out there."

"I'd love to stay on and help Bryan if he wanted me, but that would be up to him. The new man may want his own staff, we understand that. That's the game."

"However, it would be a shame to let the work of the last two years go to waste. It's been terrific work under Terry, so well constructed is the work out there. The players love it, and the way he gets on with things."

"The spirit's as good as it was with Bobby Robson," Howe added. "He created a terrific spirit. That's why we did so well in Italy."

Yesterday Taylor not only nominated Nottingham Forest's Frank Clark as his choice for national coach but said in a newspaper article that Venables had been badly advised over the World Cup qualifying dates because England will be away to Italy in the last game.

Venables responded that the alternative would have been to travel to Italy in February 1997, rather than October, which would have meant England playing three of their first four qualifying matches away.

He also felt that playing Moldova, potentially the weakest team in the group, at Wembley in the penultimate fixture was an advantage. "There are no perfect draws when you've got opposition like Italy home and away," he concluded.



Howe... praises co-coach



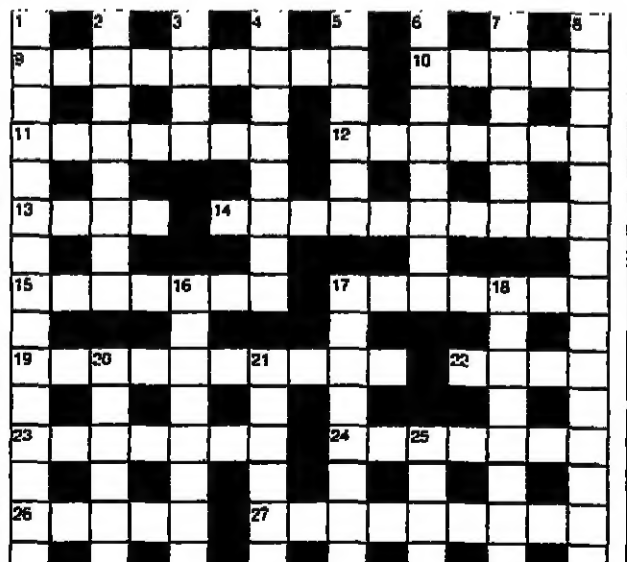
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We guards are arm to arm, silent, sullen. We are told to stare ahead. The rules of engagement are that the protesters can insult us. We must not discuss the right and wrongs of the bypass.

## Guardian Crossword No 20,558

Set by Orlando



### Across

- 8 Butler in bottle with liver but no heart (8)
10 Tree-top tall, and part below the trunk (5)
11 Exclusive group dwelling by lake (7)
12 Overseer required because handle is turning (7)
13 Animal devouring really disheartened antelope (4)
14 Palace — one that has bad poetry written about it (10)
15 Special communications channel for hotel in resort (3,4)
17 Joker with dog or bird (7)
19 Put on a new coat when someone who yields comes back to speak? (10)
22 Don, for whom Maria leaves marijuana (4)
23 Instrument seen when one's caught cold in game (7)

### Down

- 1 Shrink film by Hitchcock before the part is cast (15)
2 Find me on your street under a stone (8)
3 Busy worker going to river for a drink (4)
4 Scrooge, before one of the Psalms (8)
5 Ship's movement with 25 (6)
6 Moving rendition of prison band (8)
7 Without a little smile face is gloomy (5)
8 They illuminate obscure channels in trees (7,8)

CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,557

- 16 A nice hot stew that's unfinished (8)
17 Ordered a wet sort of pudding or sweet (5-3)
18 For a flower border I look north — it may be built on a fell (8)
20 Fraud, it appears, after half a month (8)
21 Shapes formed when hob rim goes to pot (8)
25 Male deer without aspiration or skills (4)

Solution tomorrow
Published by Guardian Newspapers Limited at 118 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER, and at 164 Dean Street, Manchester M19 2PR. Printed at the Guardian Press Centre, 2 Millharbour, London E14 6EG. Telex: Guardian, London G99999. Telephone: 020 7576 7000. Fax: 020 7576 7001. Registered office: 20, Bouverie Street, London EC4A 3DF. Registered in England. No. 20328. Registered office: 20, Bouverie Street, London EC4A 3DF. Registered in England. No. 20328.

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